











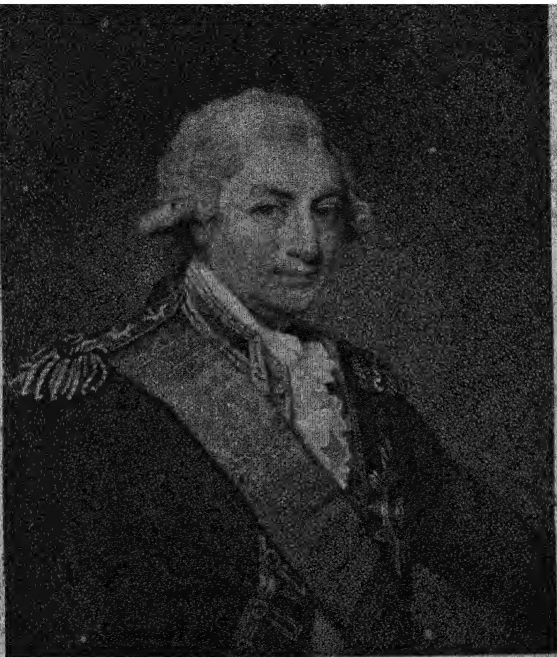
23.2.13

THE LIFE OF JOHN JERVIS  
ADMIRAL LORD ST. VINCENT









SIR JOHN JERVIS, K.B.

Admiral of the White and Commander-in-Chief in the West Indies.

*From a print lent by Messrs. T. H. Parker, printsellers, 45, Whitechapel St., London.*

[Frontispiece]

# THE LIFE OF JOHN. JERVIS ADMIRAL LORD ST. VINCENT

BY CAPTAIN W. V. ANSON, R.N.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF ADMIRAL LORD ANSON"



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, MAPS, AND PLANS

ASIATIC SOCIETY  
CALCUTTA.

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1913

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

86951

## PREFACE

THE very name of St. Vincent seems to be associated with the word "discipline." History is full of instances where, in strenuous and difficult times, when every one is looking for the one man capable of dealing with the situation to appear, he suddenly steps on to the stage. In the latter part of the eighteenth century a man of a stern and unbending nature was wanted in the English Navy; a man who could mould the characters of brave but very rough men, many of whom had been forced into a sea-life against their will, and transform them into the fine fighting material and splendid seamen they eventually became.

Put into the Navy by Anson, who was a Staffordshire man like himself, John Jervis started with nothing to help him beyond Anson's nomination, and a letter afterwards, asking Saunders to look after him; and it was by sheer hard work and ability that he rose to the position he ultimately held. It was, doubtless, the hard battle he had to fight as a lad in order to force his way up that produced in him the stern simplicity and hard exterior (hiding a warm nature underneath) which made him feared, indeed, but respected and obeyed with all the loyalty a good and

able man is sure to win from those who serve under him and trust him.

The sea never pardons a mistake. Sir Charles Napier says :

“An ignorant officer is a murderer. All brave men confide in the knowledge he is supposed to possess ; and when the death-trial comes their generous blood flows in vain. Merciful God ! How can an ignorant man charge himself with so much bloodshed ? I have studied war long, earnestly and deeply, but yet I tremble at my own deficiencies.”

If these words be true of the soldier, how much more true are they of the sailor, who has not only the enemy, but wind and waves to contend with ?

St. Vincent was an able, a brave, an indefatigable officer, and the strict discipline he instilled into the naval service enabled him, and Nelson after him, to win those battles over the French and Spanish that made England and Europe free. It has been said that “all preparation for war must precede the outbreak of hostilities,” and that “in the building-up of the military edifice—unless that rests solidly on discipline—the work of the mason is in vain.” St. Vincent was the mason who built up the solid foundation of discipline which Nelson used so brilliantly—and without which his victories would have been almost impossible.

There is something fascinating in the lives of these stern, strong men whose unbending will guided England's destinies in the time of her trials. The eighteenth century was a period

on which we cannot look back with any feeling of pride at the moral and social condition of our country, and these great men stand out more prominent and in stronger relief from the darkness of their background.

Anson, trained in a school of hardship, had done much to create a spirit of sturdy resistance to the enervating tendencies of the age. His example had been followed by Hawke, De Saumarez, Saunders, Howe, Rodney, and Duncan, and, now, St. Vincent, his former *protégé*, carried on the same tradition.

It is not always the men who do the world's work that gain the high reward of the popular hero. In the arts and sciences, no less than on the battle-field, it is only when the spirit of the time and the surrounding atmosphere are favourable that a great leader can hope to reap his due share of recognition. For instance, it is only lately that the work of that great navigator, Captain Cook, has been estimated at its proper value, in spite of the fact that his surveys in all parts of the world stand to this day, and were carried out with the help of instruments so primitive as to be a marvel to all who see the results obtained with them.

St. Vincent does not appear in any of our great memorials. He may not always have been popular. He was, perhaps, too stern in his ideas, too straight in his outspoken criticism of what he held to be wrong. Yet, as Tennyson says :

“It was our ancient policy, my Lords—  
To fling whate’er we felt,  
Not fearing, into words.”

and—

“Yea, let all good things await  
Him who cares not to be great  
But as he saves or serves the State.”

Many a man will feel heartened and strengthened, when the time of trial comes, as come it must, by having read of the lives of these great men, and by the belief that they may still be watching with keenest interest those who now or in the future may be entrusted with the task of upholding the cause of the country which they lived and died to save.

In writing this life, I owe thanks to Lady Parker for allowing me free access to all St. Vincent's letters and papers.<sup>1</sup> I am also indebted to Tucker's life of St. Vincent published in 1844. As Tucker had access to St. Vincent's papers, and we have drawn upon the same sources, there must necessarily be a good deal of matter which is the same in both books. Tucker's father was Secretary to Lord St. Vincent, and knew him perhaps better than any one else, with the possible exception of Dr. Baird, to whom St. Vincent constantly wrote about the service, especially in the latter part of his life. I have also searched carefully through the large collection of MSS. in the British Museum and the Record Offices for anything that might throw fresh light on my subject.

I am much indebted to Mr. Leonard Crosslé for valuable assistance.

<sup>1</sup> St. Vincent left all his papers to Admiral Sir William Parker, the last of Nelson's captains, who was a nephew of St. Vincent and a great favourite of both him and Nelson.

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### HIS EARLY LIFE

1735—1769

Birth and Education of J. Jervis—Entry into the Navy—Service in the West Indies—Sails with Boscawen—Serves under Saunders—Action in the *Experiment* with the xebec—Serves in Canada under Sir Charles Saunders—The capture of Quebec—Relations with Wolfe—Appointed to command of *Scorpion*—Enforces obedience in the *Albany*—Service in Canada—Promoted to post-captain in the *Gosport*—Peace consigns him to the shore pp. 1—23

## CHAPTER II

### SERVICE AS CAPTAIN

1769—1774

Appointed to the *Alarm*—Liberates two Turkish slaves—Shipwrecked in the Bay of Marseilles—His attachment to Miss Parker—Attendance on the Duke of Gloucester in Italy—Paid off and travels with Barrington on the Continent . . . pp. 24—40

## CHAPTER III

### EFFICIENCY AND HONOURS

1775—1782

Appointed to the *Foudroyant*—The battle of Ushant—The subsequent court-martial on Keppel—Serves under Sir Charles Hardy—Under Barrington—Spirited action and capture of the *Pégase*, in which he is wounded—Serves under Howe at the relief of Gibraltar—His splendid school for officers in *Foudroyant* and care for those who served under him—Letters from Barré and Keppel pp. 41—72



## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER IV

## TROUBLOUS TIMES

1775—1790

American Independence—Rodney's letter—Discipline in the Navy bad—The country impoverished by the war—Foreign fleets in the Channel—Ireland in a perturbed state—The *Foudroyant* pays off—Jervis enters Parliament—His speeches in the House—Hoists his flag in the *Prince*—Hereditary claims to advancement . . . . . pp. 73—84

## CHAPTER V

## THE NINE YEARS WAR

1792—1802

The French Revolution—War with France—Jervis hoists his flag in the *Boyne* and sails for the West Indies with a squadron—Sir Charles Grey commands the forces—The distinguished officers who served under him—Attack on Martinique—Captain Faulkner's intrepid action—Yellow fever amongst the forces—Illness of Sir John Jervis—Obtains permission to retire, but, on the arrival of French reinforcements under Victor Hugues, remains on the station—Admiral Caldwell arrives with reinforcements—Sir John Jervis, with Sir Charles Grey on board, returns home—The *Boyne* arrives at Spithead and is burnt . pp. 85—109

## CHAPTER VI

## THE MEDITERRANEAN COMMAND

1795—1796

Sir John Jervis appointed to command in the Mediterranean—Sails in the *Lively*—Hoists his flag in the *Victory* at San Fiorenzo Bay—His discipline—He meets Nelson—The outlook on the station—Bonaparte's advance into Italy—Jervis communicates with Austrian generals—Scarcity of supplies—Close blockade of Toulon—Writes to the Admiralty about Nelson—Toulon a wearisome command—The Neapolitan Government deserts us—The Pope purchases peace—Leghorn taken by Bonaparte—Fremantle carries off all English supplies and stores, etc.—Nelson seizes Ferrajo in Elba—Difficulty of holding Corsica . . . . . pp. 110—130

## CHAPTER VII

THE MEDITERRANEAN COMMAND (*continued*)

1796—1797

War with Spain imminent—Sir John Jervis collects his forces—Admiral Mann leaves Cadiz and Richery slips out—Lángara, the Spanish admiral, sails for Toulon with nineteen ships—Admiral Mann, having arrived without provisions, is sent back to Gibraltar—Distress of the blockading fleet off Toulon—The Government decide to abandon the Mediterranean, being afraid of danger nearer home—Mann looked for at San Fiorenzo, but does not arrive, having been chased into Gibraltar—He goes home—Sir John Jervis leaves San Fiorenzo with the fleet—They encounter storms and arrive at Gibraltar . pp. 131—146

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE ABANDONMENT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

1796—1797

The British Government uncertain about the abandonment of the Mediterranean—Sir John Jervis proceeds to the Tagus—Accidents to ships there—Jervis's anxiety about Nelson relieving Porto Ferrajo—Letters to Nelson and Bowen—Nelson rejoins—Battle of St. Vincent—Memorandum of Commander-in-Chief after the battle—Landing of the prisoners—Comments on the battle—Rewards . . . . . pp. 147—177

## CHAPTER IX

## THE BLOCKADE OF CADIZ

1797

St. Vincent in the Tagus—Blockade of Cadiz—The incident at Belem Castle—The enemy at sea—Promptly checked—Stories of St. Vincent—Causes of the mutinous spirit in the Fleet—Extracts from the Log of the *Clyde*—The contagion of the mutiny reaches the ships at Cadiz—Captain Maitland's action—Mutinous ships sent by Admiralty to St. Vincent—His dealing with the ships—Constant employment—Nelson sent to Tenerife—Nelson goes home—Returns to the fleet—St. Vincent still blockading—Strict but just—The *Marlborough*—Success of his discipline pp. 178—202

## CHAPTER X

THE BLOCKADE OF CADIZ AND THE EVENTS IN  
THE MEDITERRANEAN

1797—1799

Dealings with mutiny off Cadiz—Winter off Lisbon—Nelson chosen for the Mediterranean over the heads of other officers—Jealousy of Sir John Orde—St. Vincent and Sir John Orde—Troubridge and his ships sent to join Nelson—St. Vincent repairs to Gibraltar—Stories of Gibraltar—Sir Sydney Smith—Nelson follows Bonaparte to Egypt—Troubridge's letter after the Nile—Repairs of ships—D'Esterre-Darby—Makes water-tanks at Gibraltar—More stories—He establishes the Garrison Library at Gibraltar—Sir Isaac Coffin—St. Vincent's illness—He follows the Brest fleet—Goes on shore at Port Mahon—Nelson's letters—St. Vincent gives up command to Lord Keith and returns to England and strikes his flag . . . . . pp. 203—253

## CHAPTER XI

## THE CHANNEL FLEET

1799—1801

St. Vincent goes to Rochetts—Sir John Orde—Expedition to Brest—Selected for command of the Channel—The Channel Fleet—His discipline—Blockade of Brest—Blown away—Returns to rigorous blockade—Disaffection of officers unused to his discipline—Dr. Baird and his care of the fleet—Actions of Campbell, Hamilton, and Coghlan—Stories of St. Vincent—The Naval Asylum for Orphans—St. Vincent returns to Tor Bay—Goes to live at Torr Abbey . . . . . pp. 254—281

## CHAPTER XII

## FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY

1801—1802

Pitt resigns—St. Vincent as First Lord of the Admiralty—Tucker—Discipline and inspection of the dockyards—Encounters much opposition—Napoleon and the peace—Ships for the Baltic—The Royal Marines—Sir James Saumarez and his action off Gibraltar—His victory—Mazzaredo—Peace of Amiens—Plymouth breakwater . . . . . pp. 282—300

# CONTENTS

xiii

## CHAPTER XIII

### ST. VINCENT'S TROUBLED POLITICAL LIFE

1802—1807

Declaration of war with France—Pitt's criticism of St. Vincent's policy—Sir Edward Pellow's testimony—England overpoweringly strong in her well-disciplined crews—France weak in her want of training—Napoleon deceives Nelson—Interview with the King—St. Vincent called on to serve again in command of Channel Fleet—Hoists the Union at the main—Loss of his nephew, William Henry Jervis—Captain William Parker—Appreciation of Grenville at the Admiralty . . . . . pp. 301—318

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE END

1807—1823

St. Vincent's old age—His character—His friends—His grief over the loss of Troubridge—His politics and speeches—Sir Frederick Maitland—Napoleon—Sir William Parker—St. Vincent visits the south of France—He sinks and dies—The end . . . pp. 319—339

APPENDICES . . . . . 341

INDEX , , , , , , . 361



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SIR JOHN JERVIS, K.B., ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE AND COM- MANDER-IN-CHIEF IN THE WEST INDIES . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>From a print lent by Messrs. T. H. Parker, printsellers, 45 Whitcomb St., London.</i>	
VICE-ADMIRAL THE HON. A. KEPPEL . . . . .	FACING PAGE 42
<i>From a print lent by Messrs. T. H. Parker.</i>	
ADMIRAL BARRINGTON . . . . .	58
CAPTAIN FAULKNER STORMING FORT ROYAL, MARTINIQUE . . . . .	96
<i>By kind permission of Messrs. T. H. Parker.</i>	
VICE-ADMIRAL SIR THOMAS FRANCIS FREMANTLE, G.C.B. . . . .	126
COMMEMORATION OF BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT . . . . .	168
REAR-ADMIRAL SIR THOMAS TROUBRIDGE, BART. . . . .	216
<i>From a print lent by Messrs. T. H. Parker.</i>	
ADMIRAL THE EARL OF ST. VINCENT, K.B. . . . .	282
<i>From a painting in the possession of Lady Parker.</i>	
VICE-ADMIRAL SIR JAMES SAUMAREZ, K.B. . . . .	290
ADMIRAL THE EARL OF ST. VINCENT, K.B. . . . .	312
<i>From an engraving by H. Robinson after the painting by John Hoppner in St. James's Palace</i>	

## PLANS AND MAPS

QUEBEC . . . . .	16
THE MEDITERRANEAN OUTLOOK . . . . .	116
BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT, I. TO VIII. . . . .	158—167
PLAN OF BREST . . . . .	262



# LIFE OF ADMIRAL LORD ST. VINCENT

## CHAPTER I

### HIS EARLY LIFE

1735—1769

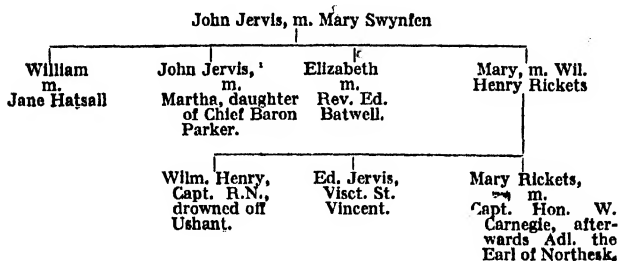
"Youth is properly the forming time, that time in which a man makes himself, or is made, what he is for ever to be."—  
RUSKIN.

JOHN JERVIS was born on January 20th, 1735. The family of Jervis had been long established in Staffordshire (a county noted for the sturdy vigour and manliness of its sons) and in the reign of Edward III. it possessed considerable estates at Chab-Kyll, near Meaford. His mother came of an old Worcestershire family. Her grandfather, John Swynfen, sat for Tamworth under Charles I., through the Protectorate and on into the reign of Charles II.

As we constantly find in the letters of St. Vincent to Dr. Baird references to the Rickets



and Northesk families, the following tree will indicate the relationships :



John Jervis was first sent to the free school at Burton-on-Trent, and he mentions the great severity of the master, the Rev. Humphrey Jackson, and also states that his wife was a great shrew.

In 1745, when the Young Pretender marched through the country and appeared at Leek, in Staffordshire, all the boys wore plaid ribbons except Jervis and another boy called Dick Meux who were pelted as Constitutionalists and Whigs in consequence.

It is interesting—now that there is so much discussion as to the educational value of Greek—to note that Jervis was looked upon as the best Greek scholar in the school, and was selected by the examiner to read a passage from Homer.

He was intended by his father to follow his own profession of the law, but in 1747, Mr. Jervis being appointed Counsel to the

<sup>1</sup> The subject of this memoir.

Admiralty and Auditor of Greenwich Hospital, his son was removed from the Burton school to Swindell's Academy at Greenwich. Jervis himself used to declare that what influenced him in selecting the Navy as a career was the advice of his father's coachman, a man called Pinkthorne, who recommended the sea, and condemned all lawyers as rogues; but there were probably other reasons besides, for at the Greenwich school he became a great friend of "Dicky" Strachan (the father of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan). Young Strachan had already served as a midshipman, and the two friends ran away to Woolwich. Jervis's relations tried in vain to induce him to return, but when he had once evinced his predilection for the sea no expostulations on the part of his parents could shake him. Accordingly, he was introduced by his paternal uncle, Mr. John Parker of the Exchequer, to Lord Anson, then at the Admiralty (and a connection of his own) and was shortly afterwards placed on board the *Gloucester* (Captain Storr), carrying the broad pennant of Commodore the Honourable George Townshend, to whom he was introduced by Lord Wenlock.

The *Gloucester* sailed for Port Royal, where she lay for a year as guardship, and Mr. Jervis, not being well off, was only able to give his son £20 for his outfit, a sum which had to cover his private expenses as well.

Being then only thirteen years of age, and of a very active and lively disposition, he felt that to remain on board the *Gloucester* was not the best thing for him. The idleness and monotony of life on board the Guardship he found too dull and uninteresting, while the amusements on shore were too dissipated and dear. For these reasons he volunteered regularly for service in any ship that happened to be putting to sea or going on any expedition of importance, and when compelled to remain in port he devoted his time to study, and showed, it is said, a surprising aptitude and memory for all branches of professional and general knowledge. At one time he was lent to the *Ferret* sloop, Captain Scroope, in which vessel he was ordered to the Mosquito Coast, to force a trade. While on this station he ran very short of money, but by rigid economy he soon extricated himself from the difficulties in which he was placed by not receiving any supplies from home. The first lieutenant, Mr. Lemprière, and Mr. Williamson, the Master (afterwards lost in the *Ramillies*), were very clever fellows, and from them he received the best possible instruction in his profession.

In 1753 he returned to England in the *Sphinx* (Captain Wheeler), from which ship he wrote the following letter to his sister, Mary Jervis, while stationed in the West Indies :

" 'SPHINX,'

" April 12th, 1753.

" MY DEAR SISTER,

" There are many entertainments and public assemblies here, but they are rather above my sphere, many inconveniences and expenses attending them, so that my chief employ, when from my duty, is reading, studying navigation, and perusing my old letters, of which I have almost enough to make an octavo volume.

" Yours,

" JERVIS."

Captain Wheeler was a Staffordshire man, very amiable and very talented, and Jervis received great kindness from him, and afterwards returned with him to England, when, the *Sphinx* having been paid off, he was transferred for a few months to the *William and Mary* yacht. Then he passed his examination at the Navy Office, and was promoted as a lieutenant into the *Royal Anne*, formerly called the *Royal George*, and soon afterwards into the *Devonshire*. He had been in the West Indies from 1748 to 1754, and it can easily be understood that by no imaginable economy would it have been possible for him, living with other officers, to make the £20 he received from his father, in 1748, suffice for all his wants during these seven years, even had he realised from the outset that he was not to receive a farthing more from his father. Many years afterwards he used to tell the following story :

"My father had a very large family, with limited means. He gave me £20 at starting, and that was all he gave me. After I had been a considerable time on the station I drew on him for £20 more, but this bill came back protested. I was mortified at this rebuke, and made a vow, which I have ever since kept, that I would never draw another bill without the certainty of its being paid. I immediately changed my mode of living, quitted my mess, living alone, and took up the ship's allowance, which I found quite sufficient; washed and mended my own clothes, made a pair of trousers out of the ticking of my own bed; and, having by these means saved as much money as would redeem my honour, I took up the bill; and from that time to this [he would add with great energy] I have taken care to keep within my means" (Brenton, *Life of St. Vincent*, vol. i. pp. 19, 20).

Though he seems to have been deeply mortified by his pecuniary distress, it formed in ~~him~~ a lofty spirit of independence, which was never quenched in after-life. He had been taught to rely upon himself. The lesson had imbued him with that confidence in his own resources which was his distinguishing characteristic, and to which his superiority over other men was largely due. In order to find money for the returned bill, he had to effect his discharge from one ship to another, ~~as as~~ to obtain his pay-tickets, which he contrived to sell at 40 per cent. discount; and during the remainder of his time on the station his

life was one continual struggle with pinching and privation. He sold all his own bedding and slept on the bare deck; he never allowed himself any fresh meat, nor the fruit or vegetables (which are so necessary and so cheap in the West Indies) except when he was able to barter with the negroes some small part of his ship's provisions in exchange for them. He had no money to spend on shore, and so he kept on board. From an old quartermaster called Drysdale, who had been mate of a merchant vessel, he received the greatest assistance in learning navigation, a science in which he became very proficient.

At the close of 1754, whilst Jervis was serving in the *Devonshire*, it became clear that war with France was imminent. Supplies were unanimously voted in Parliament, and a powerful fleet was fitted out to oppose the force which France had collected at Brest for service on the American coast. Admiral Lord Anson took command, and Jervis, who had just passed an excellent examination as a lieutenant, was ordered to Chatham to assist in fitting out the *Prince*, which was to be Anson's flagship, with Captain Saunders as flag-captain, and he quickly won a high place in the good opinion of his captain.

In February 1755 Jervis was appointed junior lieutenant of the *Royal George*, and in March was transferred to the *Nottingham*. During

February the Admiralty, under Lord Anson's Administration, had prepared a fleet of thirty ships of the line ready for sea. Warlike preparations were proceeding busily on both sides of the Channel. When the French fleet, carrying Baron Dickau, the French general, and his troops, was ready for sea, Vice-Admiral Boscawen, with eleven ships of the line (including the *Nottingham*) and one frigate, was ordered to intercept them. We were not at war, but letters of marque and reprisal had been issued. Boscawen captured two of the French ships, the others escaping in a fog. His fleet returned to England, the crews being in a terrible state of sickness.

It is not necessary here to give an account of the loss of Minorca and Admiral Byng's failure—as these events are too well known to bear recapitulation—but when Sir Edward Hawke was sent out to relieve Admiral Byng it was thought so desirable that Captain Saunders should be the second in command that he was promoted specially, in order to allow him to hoist his flag—such confidence had the First Lord in his abilities. Saunders again selected Jervis to accompany him.

In March 1756, when the *Dorchester* was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet, Lieutenant Jervis was appointed to her, but soon afterwards was removed to the *Prince*, in which ship Admiral Saunders flew his flag, and when next

year, he shifted to the *Cultoden*, he took Jervis with him as his second lieutenant. At this time Jervis had his first opportunity of distinguishing himself, for Captain Strachan, who commanded a small sloop called the *Experiment*, having left his ship owing to illness, Jervis was appointed captain of her, and received orders to cruise off Catalonia. On March 17th, 1756, as the *Experiment* was steering her course, she sighted a French privateer xebeque. Several shots were fired to bring her to, and the *Experiment* gave chase. The xebeque hoisted Moorish colours and crowded all sail to get away, although she was much the larger and more powerful of the two. She was also much the faster, and when, towards evening, it became evident that she could not be overtaken, the *Experiment* gave up the chase and resumed her course. The privateer, mistaking this action for an attempt to escape, stood after her, and at 7.30 was within gun-shot. An action commenced and lasted nearly three hours, when the Frenchman made off. The English ship then gave chase with all the sail she could clap on, but was again unable to overtake the Frenchman, though she chased all night. At daylight the xebeque was out of sight. The *Experiment* had one midshipman killed and several men wounded. Her hull and mainmast had been shot through in several places, and as it was blowing hard



she had to shorten sail. At 10 a.m. the *xebeque* was again sighted. In spite of the damage he had suffered, Jervis once more made all sail in pursuit, and, although the wind increased to a gale towards the afternoon, he stood on after her till the privateer was seen to go through the Straits of Gibraltar, when Jervis at last gave up and proceeded to Gibraltar to refit. It was a spirited action with a much larger vessel as his opponent, and did him great credit.

Now came what was the most important incident in Jervis's early life. An expedition on a large scale having been decided on against Quebec, Sir Charles Saunders was appointed to superintend it in charge of the naval forces. He was, therefore, recalled from the Mediterranean and shifted his flag into the *Neptune*, Jervis accompanying him as first lieutenant. Major-General Sir James Wolfe, who was in command of the military forces, and his aide-de-camp, Colonel Barré, were the guests of the admiral, and a great friendship sprang up between these two and Lieutenant Jervis. General Wolfe had been an old schoolmate of his, and so intimate did the two friends now become that when, on the eve of battle, Wolfe needed some one whom he could entrust with the most important and confidential mission possible, he chose his friend Jervis. With Colonel Barré, Jervis and the two friends now

friendship to the end of his life. It was on February 16th, 1759, that Admiral Saunders, who the day before had received his commission as Vice-Admiral of the Blue, hoisted his flag on board the *Neptune* (90). Very bad weather was experienced on the passage across the Atlantic. The fleet reached Halifax on April 30th, after encountering much ice and snow, and on May 13th sailed for Louisbourg, arriving there on May 16th. Admiral Durell had already been sent from Halifax to cruise off the mouth of the St. Lawrence and block the supplies which the French were expecting at Quebec, and he arrived and passed up the river, though too late to prevent some French ships from getting through. On June 4th the fleet conveying the troops got under weigh in Louisbourg harbour, and sailed for Quebec, a confident spirit pervading all ranks. The coast of Newfoundland was sighted on June 7th, and the island of Anticosti was passed on June 13th. The difficulties of navigation in the St. Lawrence were great, and, as the best French pilot, De Vitri, had been given to Admiral Durell, Admiral Saunders took with him a pilot called Rabi, who turned out to be of little use. Fortunately, Admiral Saunders was a man of great resource and a very able sailor and pilot. He conducted the fleet in safety up the river in spite of frequent head-winds, and they arrived on June 7th and anchored off the Isle of Orleans,

opposite the Isle of Beauport, an outlying defence below Quebec.

The fleet consisted of twenty-two ships of the line, thirteen frigates, numerous transports and river craft. The troops numbered 8,635 men. The French troops were numerically superior and lay behind entrenchments singularly aided by nature. About Quebec the bank of the river was precipitous, while below it earthworks had been thrown up from the Falls of the Montmorency, almost opposite the British ships, to the river St. Charles, near the city. The French force of 15,000 men included 5,000 militia and a number of Indians, these last being of doubtful value. It is related that warfare was carried on in this part of the world between the English and French in a revolting, cruel, and barbarous manner; but the French were said to be the worst offenders. Scalps were taken by the regulars on both sides, following the example of the Indians. The plan of Montcalm was to act on the defensive, whilst the command of the sea enabled the British to make good their own losses while preventing reinforcements from reaching the French, and to shift their troops up or down river so as to attack first one point and then another. Montcalm hoped that, by protracting the siege, the advent of winter would force the British ships out of the river to escape the ice, and thus free him of their presence. On July 30th Wolfe

having spent some five weeks before Quebec and finding the summer was nearly past and that a good deal of his ammunition had been used, determined on decisive action, since time was slipping away, and he must justify himself to the British minister; he therefore made up his mind to attack the French in their entrenchments on their left or eastern flank, near the Montmorency Falls. This attack proved a complete failure, our casualties being 420 men and 30 officers killed and wounded. The confidence of the troops in Wolfe was much shaken by this defeat, and it preyed on his mind so terribly that he fretted and worried himself into a fever.

It was in this month of July that Jervis had his first chance of distinguishing himself. Wolfe wanted to get his transports with troops taken up the river and past Quebec, and, Captain Cook having surveyed the passage for the boats, in which operation he was interrupted by an Indian attack, Jervis was selected by Saunders to lead in the *Porcupine*. He took General Wolfe on board, the transports following. The station to which the *Porcupine* was bound lay a little below the Falls of Montmorency, but just as she got close under the guns of Quebec it fell a dead calm, and the stream of the river, which is exceedingly swift at this point, carried the ship rapidly towards the flats, and within reach of the guns of the

battery of Fort Louis. No sooner was the helplessness of the *Porcupine* perceived by the enemy than they opened fire upon her from both sides of the river, and she was in imminent danger of being destroyed before the eyes of the British army. As every one knew the British general was on board, this would have had a very demoralising effect on the expedition. But Jervis showed his promptness and resource in a moment of danger. He got sweeps out, hoisted out his boats to tow, and, cheering on his men through the fire from the fort, he brought the *Porcupine* to her station. As this was done at low water, he was enabled to pilot the ships and the transports successfully past the forts, and carry the troops to a landing-place.

By the middle of August we had 1,000 men in hospital, Wolfe himself being sick and confined to bed in his quarters; but his high spirits kept his determination unshaken, though he must have been getting very anxious, for the Canadian winter was now close at hand.

On August 5th Brigadier Murray was despatched up the river with 1,200 men in boats to embark in Holmes's ships, which were lying above the town. This manœuvre contributed to the final success, for Montcalm detached Bougainville with 1,500 men from the main force at Beauport, to watch Murray's movements. His troops comfortably housed on

board the ships, were allowed to float up and down with the tide, while the French troops were much exhausted by the marching and countermarching.

Wolfe's feeble constitution began to succumb under all these disappointments and anxieties. Autumn was approaching and the admirals were anxious to be out of the river before the equinoctial gales set in. The success of the expedition began to appear more and more doubtful. Something had to be done at once. We need not here go into the question as to who was the author of the plan. Suffice it to say that an attack was determined upon.

As the result of a conference of the brigadiers the camp at Montmorency was evacuated on August 29th, and all the troops that had been stationed there were conveyed to Point Levi. We read in a diary of that date, September 5th :

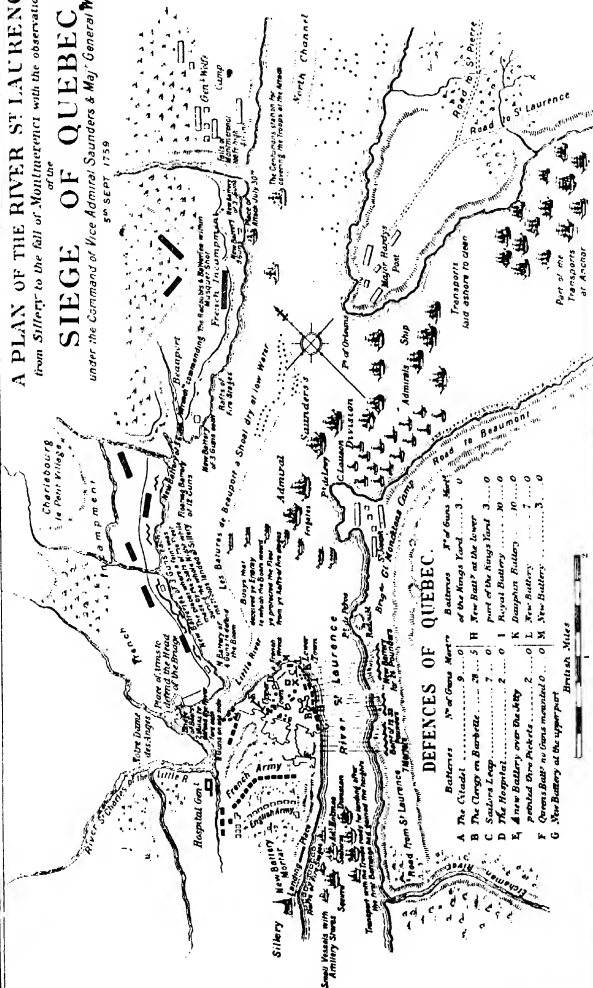
"Generals Monckton and Townshend marched at 2 p.m. with Amherst's regiment, Kennedy, and the Frazer Highlanders. They crossed the Etcherin River, and, a little above, lay our ships, with the troops that had gone up with Murray, and two battalions of Royal Americans on board. The boats embarked the troops, and the ships were very much crowded. Wolfe came from Point Levi an hour later, escorted by 100 Frazer Highlanders. On September 7th the ships moved up and anchored off Cape Rouge. On the 8th and 9th it rained hard.

On the 10th Wolfe, Townshend, Monckton, and Admiral Holmes went down the river to reconnoitre, and the result of their exploration was that Wolfe determined to get his army up on to the Plains of Abraham and to fight on that ground."

On September 11th, the night previous to the battle, after all the orders for the assault had been given, Wolfe sought an interview with Jervis, and told him he had the strongest presentiment that he should be killed in the fight of the morrow, but was sure that, if he did die, it would be on the field of victory. He then unbuttoned his waistcoat, and, taking from his breast a miniature of a young girl, he delivered it to Jervis, begging that, if the foreboding came true, he would return it to her with his own hands on his arrival in England. Jervis promised to do so, and on his return had the painful duty of delivering the pledge to Miss Lowther.

I need not here go into all the details of the battle of ~~Abraham~~ and the taking of Quebec, but will content myself with a recital of the main incidents. On the night of September 12th, Admiral Saunders moved the line-of-battle ships which were below Quebec towards the Beauport shore, anchoring as near the enemy's lines as the water would permit. The boats were then lowered, filled with seamen and marines, and drawn up in order, so as to make the enemy believe that we intended to effect a landing

# A PLAN OF THE RIVER ST LAURENCE at the SIEGE OF QUEBEC under the Command of Vice Admiral Saunders & Majr General Wolfe 5th SEPT. 1759



## DEFENCES OF QUEBEC.

Batteries	No of Guns	Mortars
A The Citadel	9	0
B The Clergy on Barbette	28	5
C Soldiers Long	7	0
D The Hospital	2	0
E A new Battery over the City	2	0
F Queens Bast' no Guns mounted	0	0
G New Battery at the upper part	0	0
H New Bast' at the lower part of the Kings Yard	3	0
I Royal Battery	10	0
K Dauphin Battery	7	0
L New Battery	3	0
M New Battery	3	0

British Miles





between Beauport and the mouth of the St. Charles. Wolfe's force above Quebec had embarked in the boats about 9 p.m., the night being starlit but moonless. The boats were laden with the troops, sitting between the seamen at their oars. At sundown Admiral Saunders began to bombard the town so as to keep up the deception of a threatened landing at Beauport. At 1 o'clock, as the tide was ebbing, Wolfe left the *Sunderland* and got into a boat; two lanterns, one above the other, were shown on board the *Sunderland*, this being the appointed signal, and the whole flotilla began to drift down-stream, the seamen hardly using their oars. The troops landed before daybreak, and, proceeding by a narrow and precipitous path, formed up on the Plains of Abraham. They had only been able to take one gun with them owing to the steepness of the path. Montcalm had been expecting an attack from Admiral Saunders's ships, which had been firing all night, and had increased their fire towards morning; but now he suddenly learnt that the enemy were already on the Plains of Abraham, having landed on the other side. As fast as he could get his troops across the river St. Charles he sent them to take up their positions to the west of the town. He had a force of 7,520 men, including Indians, with him, whereas Wolfe had only 4,828 under his command. Our infantry, with fine dis-

cipline and courage, stood the French fire without returning it, until the enemy was within forty yards, when they opened fire in turn, and the volleys completely shattered the French columns, which first wavered under their heavy loss, and then gave way, chased by our men, who advanced with bayonets fixed, cheering loudly. Wolfe was killed and General Monckton severely wounded, and General Townshend took command. On the French side Montcalm was mortally wounded and died two days later. We lost 500 men, and the French 2,500. Townshend had only just got his men into order when Bougainville's troops were seen approaching in the rear; but, on being confronted with two fresh regiments and the fire of some field-pieces (captured from the French), they retreated.

Guns were now got up from the fleet and the general entrenched himself. On September 17th a flag of truce arrived, and on the following day Quebec surrendered. In his report to Mr. Pitt, General Townshend says :

“ I should be wanting in paying my due respects to the admirals of the naval service if I neglected this occasion to acknowledge how much we are indebted for our success to the constant assistance and support we have received, and to the perfect harmony and immediate correspondence which has prevailed throughout our operations in the uncommon difficulties which the nature of this country in

particular presents to military operations of a great extent, and which no army in itself can solely supply; the immense labour in transporting artillery, stores and provisions, the long watching and attending in boats, the drawing-up our artillery, even in the heat of action, it is my duty, though my command has been short, to acknowledge for that time, how great a share the Navy has had in this successful campaign."

General Murray was left in command at Quebec, and the fleet set sail for England. On his way home Admiral Saunders heard that the French fleet had at last made its way out of Brest, and started immediately to see if he could help Hawke, who was stationed there; but, finding the latter had already won his battle at Quiberon he continued on his course homewards.

While Saunders was scoring a victory in the West and Hawke was defeating the enemy in Quiberon Bay, Boscawen had been successful in the Mediterranean. England's command of the sea was thus, for the moment, complete.

Admiral Saunders was so pleased with the services rendered by Jervis that he appointed him to the command of the *Scorpion*, and sent him on ahead with news of the capture of Quebec. On his arrival in England the Admiralty confirmed his appointment to the *Scorpion*, and sent him to New York with important despatches for General Amherst.

When he left Spithead it was blowing a gale, and the sloop (an old leaky vessel, which shortly after foundered at sea) made so much water that he was obliged to put into Plymouth.

There, on his representing the importance of his orders to the port admiral, he was ordered to go on board the *Albany*, a sloop lying in the sound; and so urgently was his immediate departure pressed that it was with great difficulty that he obtained permission and time to take his own boat's crew out of the *Scorpion*.

Now it so happened that the *Albany* had been a long time in commission, and that considerable arrears of pay were due to her crew; moreover, they had been accustomed only to short cruises along the coast, as convoy, and they did not relish the idea of a long voyage across the Atlantic. As Commander Jervis stepped over the side, he promptly gave the order, "Up anchor!" The crew absolutely refused to obey, and, running on to the quarter-deck, loudly announced their intentions. But they little knew with whom they had to do. For Jervis, *seeing his duty*, proved now, for the first time—but by no means the last—that no power on earth would deter him from *accomplishing it*. Having first reasoned fruitlessly with the men, he ordered his boat's crew from the *Scorpion* to take hatchets and cut the cables, and then sent them aloft to loose the  
power on earth would deter him from accom-

the sort of man they had to deal with. They submitted at once, gave no further trouble, and the *Albany* proceeded on her way. The ring-leaders were severely punished, and from this moment in his career Jervis met the spirit of mutiny with an uncompromising and indomitable will ; for he recognised it as something more dangerous, because more insidious, than an open enemy. Twenty-four days later the *Albany* delivered her despatches in New York, and, in accordance with his orders, Jervis prepared to return to England. He was anxious to get back without delay since Admiral Saunders, having been appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, wished Jervis to accompany him as his flag-captain. But this was not to be, for accounts were received from Governor Littleton that the Cherokee Creek Indians had made a dreadful irruption into South Carolina and that Charlestown, the capital, was in danger. General Amherst called upon Captain Jervis to assist him by conveying a body of troops thither, and, having performed this duty expeditiously, Jervis returned to England, but arrived too late to go out with Admiral Saunders, who had appointed another captain in his place.

During the summer of 1760 Jervis served under Admiral Rodney, off Havre de Grace. In the autumn he was appointed captain of the *Union*, and in October 1760 was near

moted, as post-captain, to the *Gosport* (60), and employed in convoying the trade to and from the Baltic. In the spring of 1761 he was sent out to convoy the Virginian trade, and ordered to cruise for the protection of that part of the coast of America until the homeward trade was ready.

But on arrival at New York with money sent to pay the troops he heard from Sir Geoffrey Amherst that a descent had been made in Newfoundland by a body of French troops under the command of Comte de Hasrville, landed from a squadron under the command of the Chevalier de Tiernay, consisting of the *Robuste*, *Éveille*, *Garonne*, and *Licorne*. He was also informed by General Amherst that Lord Colville had taken up a defensive position in the *North-umberland* at the entrance of Halifax Harbour, and that Governor Graves had done the same at Placentia, in Newfoundland. He proceeded instantly to Halifax, and, being soon after reinforced by the *Massachusetts*, and a provincial armed ship, the *King George*, commanded by Captain Holloway, he took Lord Colville to Placentia; there he joined Governor Graves, and, proceeding off St. John's, Newfoundland, with the *Antelope* and *Syren*, cruised about until the arrival of General Amherst with a body of convalescents and provincial troops from New York. St. John's was then retaken, and the French garrison surrendered as prisoners of

war. The French squadron made its escape in a thick fog during the night. The *Gosport* then sailed to New York with part of the troops, and, hearing that the negotiations for peace were well advanced, Jervis landed the troops and set out for England. Before leaving, however, he received most handsome acknowledgments from General Amherst for the very great services he had rendered him. On his way home he took the charge of the largest convoy that was ever entrusted to a single ship.

On May 29th, 1762, the Duke of Newcastle resigned, and Lord Bute was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and head of the Administration. His Grace declined a pension, saying that, if he could no longer serve his country, he would not be a burden to it.

On November 3rd the preliminary articles of peace between England and France were signed by the Duke of Bedford at Fontainebleau. By this treaty we gained Canada from France and Florida from Spain. Our conquests in the East Indies were restored to France, but we retained Senegal in Africa and several West Indian islands.

Lord Bute's Government did not last long, however, for on April 8th, 1763, he resigned and was succeeded by Mr. George Grenville.

The *Gosport* paid off in this year 1763, and Captain Jervis did not serve again till 1769.



## CHAPTER II

### SERVICE AS CAPTAIN

1769—1774

“Then comes the time of labour, when, having become the best he can be, he does the best he can do.”—RUSKIN.

CAPTAIN JERVIS was thirty-four years of age when he was appointed to the *Alarm*, a thirty-two-gun frigate, in February 1769. The first period of his life, that in which character is formed, was over. He was now a man who had proved himself armed at all points—well-educated, well-informed, strong, energetic, self-reliant to an extraordinary degree, and ready for all the hardships he might experience and the storms that were to break against him, only to be thrown back like the seas from the Eddystone Lighthouse, and, like it, planted on a rock, immovable, and a light to guide all and every one in the stirring times to come.

His commission in the *Alarm* was chiefly remarkable for the extraordinary evidence of resourcefulness and seamanship that he displayed in saving her from wreck, and in again getting her ready for service.

The instant repair of any damages to our ships, whether caused by storm or battle, was almost a mania with him. He could not bear that one of His Majesty's ships or vessels should ever be in difficulties or disabled without immediately being refitted by her own resources, and would acknowledge no difficulty as insurmountable. This it was that in later years kept our ships in the Mediterranean always ready and efficient for any duty that might be required of them.

After the *Alarm* reached the Mediterranean, she was employed in cruising and visiting the various ports, and in September 1769 she reached Genoa. On Sunday afternoon, being the day after her arrival, two Turkish slaves sauntered off from their galley near the Mole. Seeing the *Alarm's* boat, they jumped into the stern sheets and wrapped themselves up in the British colours, exclaiming, "We are free!" Hearing of this, the Genoese officer on duty ordered them to be forcibly taken from their refuge; and they were accordingly dragged out of the boat and sent back to their chains of bondage. It was found that one of them, in his struggles, had torn away a piece of the boat's pendant, and when his officer reported this to Captain Jervis, he at once decided that it was not only an insult to the British flag, but an outrageous enforcement of slavery, which he could by no means pass over, and that for each

of these injuries a distinct reparation was due, and must be made.

“Accordingly [to use his own language], I demanded of the Doge and Senate that both the slaves should be brought on board, with the part of the torn pendant, which the slave carried off with him, the officer of the guard punished, and an apology made on the quarter-deck of the *Alarm*, under the King’s colours, for the outrage offered to the British nation. On the following Tuesday this was literally complied with; the offending officer came, degraded, and formally made his apology on the frigate’s quarter-deck, before all her officers and ship’s company, and the slaves also were brought on board, the one bringing with him the piece of torn colours, to which he had clung for protection, and they were restored to freedom. After all this was done [continued their liberator], I asked the slave who had wrapped the pendant round his body what were his sensations when the officer tore him from the pendant staff. His reply was that he felt no dread, for he knew that the touch of the royal colours gave him freedom.”

But it would appear that the British Admiralty of that day did not encourage such vigorous support of freedom and of the honour of the national flag, for a short time afterwards we find Captain Jervis writing to his brother :

“I had an opportunity of carrying the British flag (in relation to two Turkish slaves) as high as Blake had ever done; for which I am *publicly* censured, though I hope we have too much virtue left for me not to be justified in *private*.”

Yet, whatever the views taken by his Government of Jervis's methods of asserting the honour of his flag and liberty of the subject, the practical result was that for many years afterwards in the Barbary States if a slave could but touch the British colours (which all our boats carry in foreign ports), he was able to demand his release as a matter of right. For this reason it became the practice for the slaves to be kept chained so long as a British man-of-war remained in harbour.

The question has often been raised whether this conduct of Jervis, of which in later years he was wont to say he was "most proud," was consistent with his action in afterwards opposing the Abolition of Slavery in America in the House of Lords. Personally I think it was, for he was a very shrewd man, and his argument was, "Take care that you do not hand them over to worse masters!"

In March 1770 the *Alarm* was at anchor in the port of Marseilles when the equinoctials came on, and she had a narrow escape of being wrecked, as the following account extracted from her log will show.

"On Friday, March 30th, whilst moored in Marseilles Bay, we experienced strong gales from E.S.E. Our longboat was ashore watering. At seven p.m. we fired a gun for a pilot preparatory to going to sea. At eight the pilot came on board and we began to unmoor. The captain

went on shore to pay a visit to the Commandant of the Marine. The wind now shifted suddenly to N.N.W. and increased very much. The pilot ordered the yards and topmasts to be struck [evidently knowing what they were in for] and while everybody was employed he made his escape by the stern ladder into a small boat, and got on shore. At 9 p.m. the captain came off with great difficulty, there being a great swell from N.N.W."

The next morning strong gales were blowing, with squally weather, but towards noon there was a perfect hurricane, moderating towards the afternoon with hazy weather and strong gales, the ship rolling considerably. At 2 p.m. the wind increased again. The best bower-cable parted, and the sheet and the other bower-anchor were then let go, but failed to hold her. At length she got into the influence of the surge of the Tête de Mort, where she brought up and struck violently from the fore part of the mizzen-chains aft.

The masts were cut away and signal-guns of distress fired. The pumps were manned and all hands employed in clearing away the wreck, whilst the ship still continued to strike heavily. What a night it must have been! As the main-mast went overboard it carried two of the boats away. At 3 a.m. the rudder bumped off and the cabin was destroyed from the blow of the tiller. Attempts were made to heave the ship off, but in vain. At daylight many of the

inhabitants came down to assist. They made several attempts to get a line ashore by veering buoys astern, but the return seas prevented it. As the ship was now making as much water as the pumps could keep under control, it was necessary to take some decided steps, and Joseph Smith, seaman, offered to attempt getting on shore with a line.

At 7 a.m. a small boat was launched with James Raside and Smith in her, and, although she soon filled and went to pieces, yet with the utmost intrepidity, and with the assistance of those on shore, the two men did their work, bending a hawser on to the end of a line, which the French hauled on shore and made fast to a rock, thus steadying the ship clear of the reef, upon which she was beating.

At 8 p.m. Henry Wickens (the names of these men well deserve to be remembered) swam on shore with a message to the British Consul, and the three men came off again in the first boat.

All this time the pumps were kept going incessantly—a pint of wine being served out every six hours to each member of the ship's company. Thanks to their exertions, and to the help given by hired seamen from the shore, as well as to the great assistance rendered by M. Pléville de Peltier (the port officer), the ship was saved. Captain Jervis writes to his father:

“Do not be alarmed, my dear sir, at the

newspaper accounts which you will read of the *Alarm*. The interposition of Divine Providence has most miraculously preserved her. The same Providence will, I hope, give health and long life to my dear father, mother, and brother.

“J. JERVIS.”

They had many days of wretched weather, but by great exertions the ship was moored in safety, and hove down, keel out of water, after having been stripped and emptied.

The damage done consisted of the total loss of the false keel and 28 feet of the main keel. All the gripe had gone, together with 8 feet of the stern-post and the whole of the dead-wood. No less than 22 ft. of the garboard-strake (that nearest the keel) were carried away; of the next strake 18 ft. were gone, of the third 14 ft., of the fourth 12 ft., and of the fifth 10 ft., while the sixth had entirely disappeared. The repairs were immediately taken in hand, and, in recognition of the valuable help given by M. de Peltier, the Admiralty presented him with a handsome piece of plate with a formal expression of their gratitude.

On April 12th, 1770, Captain Jervis writes to his father from Marseilles :

“I have the happiness to inform my dearest father that my prospects brighten, and I hope to be at sea in a month. I have had a severe lesson of submission to the Divine Will, gained some experience, and I have the vanity to think

lost no reputation, although other loss I have sustained enough, but that is not to be named. I feel for what my dearest parents must have suffered about their

“J. JERVIS.”

On May 11th of the same year he writes :

“I have the happiness to acquaint my dear father that one side of the *Alarm* is completely repaired, and we are setting about the other. I have received the most satisfactory letters from the Admiralty, public and private ; a glorious action in the midst of a war could not be more applauded than the gallantry of the officers and crew for theirs ; and the board is so good as to provide for the men I have pointed out, as having distinguished themselves most.

“J. JERVIS.”

In writing to his sister he says :

“Thanks, my dear sister, for your cordial of a letter. The only vacancy I felt, in the most arduous task I ever yet saw, was the want of your remembrance. I have it now, and am happy, but worn down to the merest skeleton you ever saw.

“J. JERVIS.”

The economy with which the ship was repaired (one might almost say rebuilt) was characteristic of the man, for economy in the services of the State was always one of his first cares. A sum of £1,415 covered all the expenses for the complete refit and for housing his men on shore for three months. To show what splendid



discipline he maintained and how little discontent this discipline produced, during the whole of this time there were no more than six punishments—in spite of the men being on shore with every temptation to drink—and, though the captain had to complain to the British Minister in Paris of constant attempts to induce his men to desert, he lost not a single man.

In July Jervis writes to his sister :

“The *Alarm* is the completest thing I ever saw on the water, insomuch that I have almost forgotten that she was the other day in the opinion of most—her officers and crew not excepted—a miserable, sunken wreck. Happily for my reputation, my health happened to be equal to the task or I had been lost for ever, instead of receiving continual marks of public and private approbation of my conduct; but this is *entre nous*. I never speak or write upon the subject except to those I love most. You will easily believe Barrington is one. His goodness to me is romantic.”

Captain Barrington was an officer of considerable reputation and long standing in the service, and to the end of their lives, was, among men, his dearest friend.

It is pleasant to read Jervis's letters to his favourite sister, Mrs. Rickets, in which he unbosoms himself and allows one to catch those glimpses of his warmer nature which, later on, in times of stress and opposition, become more rare. Mrs. Rickets was a woman of great talent

and strong affections, and he confided to her his inmost thoughts. He tells her of an attachment which, though it had now obtained entire possession of his thoughts, he was obliged to conceal till some years later. Mentioning Miss Parker (whom he afterwards married), he writes :

“Your sentiments are exactly conformable to my own, founded on long observation, not blinded by passion, and but for the insurmountable objects I before mentioned, I should on the first opportunity make the most unreserved proposals to her, but, situated as matters now are, the most distant hint cannot be given, lest it should tend to prevent some much better match she has just reason to expect, or embarrass her in other sort, neither of which are consistent with the value I have for her.”

The *Alarm* now proceeded to Leghorn, where Jervis was requested to show civility to the Duc de Chablais. With regard to this he writes :

“H.R.H. made handsome presents to most of the officers, which affords me more pleasure than if the attention had been conferred on me.”

In the spring of 1771 the *Alarm* arrived at Spithead, and Jervis was able to spend a short time with his family—a most welcome holiday.

Jervis's reputation was rising in the estimation of the Government, and when Prince Henry (Duke of Gloucester) was ordered abroad for his health and the King wished for a frigate to take him out, the *Alarm* was chosen for this

service—Jervis's courtliness of manner and efficiency as a seaman being the reasons why he was chosen to attend His Highness to the Italian courts.

His mission lasted from the end of the year till June 1772, and during that time he learnt a great deal about people and courts, made many friends, and was also able to acquire much useful professional knowledge. He was always interested in the study of his fellow-men, and keen on gaining any information which might stand him in good stead later on; but, apart from this, a certain amount of diplomatic knowledge is very necessary for an officer who may have to take command in the Mediterranean, and this time was not wasted in his case.

The Duke of Gloucester quitted the ship in May full of gratitude for the pleasant time he had spent on board, and the *Alarm* proceeded to Marseilles to present M. de Peltier with the plate awarded him by the Government in recognition of his services.

In June 1772 the frigate was paid off.

Jervis, who was never idle, finding that he was likely to be a long time on half-pay, considered that now was his opportunity to gain all the accomplishments and knowledge from which a life at sea had hitherto debarred him. "Time is the stuff that life is made of," as Benjamin Franklin said. He therefore determined to inform himself accurately in regard to the naval

resources, the navigation, and pilotage of the coasts and harbours of the countries that he was most likely to have to deal with. In order the better to accomplish this, he started to learn French thoroughly with the intention of joining his friend Barrington, with whom he had arranged to visit the European naval arsenals during the following summer. Accordingly he went to France, put up at a *pension*, and studied so hard that he almost ruined his health.

His mother and brother entreated him to desist, but he wrote :

“ Though I should not succeed according to my sanguine wishes and expectations, it will always be useful to have a general idea of this prevalent language, and a knowledge of the country we have so long contended with, and must ever be our rival in arms and commerce till we fall. I hope and believe that period is very distant, but summer approaches so fast that I should be loath to give up what I have been at so much pains and inconvenience to acquire.”

Shortly after this (in 1772) he wrote to his sister :

“ At first, by too close application, my health suffered to that degree that I was obliged to shake off every idea of French, and remain in a state of almost non-reflection for a month ; but I am now quite well ; I begin to take up the language at my ease, and intend paying off my master.”

He then visited Paris and all the principal manufacturing towns of France. He complains, in his letters to his sister, of the Frenchmen of that day, of their unmanly vices, their trifling folly and dissipations ; nor was he much better pleased with his own countrymen, of what would now be designated the globe-trotter class.

“Flocks pass me daily, posthaste after the bubble Pleasure. The further they travel, the greater distance they find themselves from it.”

Having acquired an adequate knowledge of French, Captain Jervis returned to England in November 1772, and in the following summer he went with his friend Barrington to St. Petersburg.

They sailed from London in a merchant trader and reached Cronstadt in August. In a journal kept by him, Jervis made notes on all occasions of anything likely to be useful to him. These show a shrewd perception of the characteristics of the people he met on his travels, and a keen eye for details calculated to be of value to him in his profession. For instance, he remarks that, “The Castle of Cronanburg, which guards the entrance into the Sound, may be overlooked by a line-of-battle ship, which may anchor in good ground as near the beach as she chooses.”

He notes that there are two channels leading to Copenhagen—“the first, called the Royal, on

the starboard side of the first, or northern buoy," and that "in the northern channel where Easter-boon Church bears N.E. by E. you may haul up to E.S.E. or higher if you wish, but should keep your lead going." Nowadays, of course, the charts and sailing directions give all this information to the navigator, but it must be remembered that at that time charts were few and not always correct. These details were therefore most valuable, for afterwards it frequently turned out that, in giving his orders, Jervis relied on knowledge of the locality possessed by himself alone.

Captain Jervis spent a month in St. Petersburg at a period when the Empress Catherine, that strange compound of administrative genius and repulsive morals, wide intellectual sympathies and barbaric habits, was at the zenith of her power, displaying, both as a ruler at home and a conqueror abroad, an energy and an ambitious patriotism worthy of the successor of the great Peter; in libertinism she outrivalled her models the French, while she showed a love for learning and science far in advance of the general civilisation of the country in which she lived, and a scepticism which fully equalled that of her correspondent Voltaire. The sway of Count Gregory Orloff, if indeed the influence exercised by any of her favourites amounted to sway, was on the wane, and he had been appointed to a place at some distance off to make room for Potemkin.

They were both in St. Petersburg at the time of Jervis's visit, as were also the scientist Stehlin, the warrior Romanzoff and the dashing young Rapnin. Shortly after he arrived he went to hear the *Te Deum*, chanted with all the splendour which the pageantry of that day could give, to celebrate the glorious peace which Catherine had just concluded with Turkey. This was followed by a Levée, which Jervis also attended.

He tells us that at the thanksgiving service—

“Catherine mingled her salutations to the Saints and to the people, showing her decent compliance with religious ceremonies and her attention to her soldiers and foreign ambassadors; but she showed no devotion.

“During the sermon she took occasion to nod and smile to those she intended to gratify, and surely no sovereign ever possessed the power of pleasing all around her as she did. She was dressed in the Guards' uniform—a scarlet pelisse, and a green silk robe, lapelled from top to bottom—her hair combed neatly and boxed *en militaire* with a small cap and a casket of diamonds in front, a blue ribbon, and the order of St. Andrew on her right shoulder.”

Jervis remarks freely in his journal on the appearance of the men and women he saw. He thoroughly inspected St. Petersburg (or, at any rate, as thoroughly as the facilities granted to him would allow) noting down a host of details in regard to its military forces, the capabilities of the Naval Arsenal, the docks, and shipping.

their contents, the number and force of the line-of-battle ships, whether in commission, built, or building, their age, or progress toward completion ; all these things are set down with the minutest care. He comments on and criticises the Russian methods of ship-building, noting the scamped work.

After leaving St. Petersburg Jervis visited Stockholm, Christiania, and Copenhagen, making the same careful study of naval and social conditions in each of these capitals. He gives the following description of the prisons at Copenhagen :

“ The Repository for slaves is loathsome to a degree ; they are most of them deserters, some loaded with irons, according to their offences. Those who had a second time deserted were chained to a wheelbarrow, each hand to a handle, which became their working companion by day and their sleeping-place at night—death alone separating them.

“ Oh ! my soul sickened at this scene of despotism.”

From Copenhagen he passed through Lubeck and Hamburg and thence to Holland, making a similar inspection of all her naval and commercial towns, and thence home to England.

The following year the two friends renewed their tour of inspection, and the ports on the western coasts of France engaged their attention.

With Havre Jervis was already acquainted,



and, as Cherbourg had not yet risen into importance, they first steered in a private yacht for Camoret Bay, and surveyed the roadsteads and creeks of Brest. They next visited Ports Louis and L'Orient, and, in order to gain a knowledge of the pilotage, coasted through Quiberon Bay, and thence up to Bordeaux and Rochefort, making notes and memoranda of the northern ports. At the close of the autumn they returned to Plymouth. Jervis had only his half-pay to cover all his expenses on these journeys. "To be sure," he admitted in after-years, "we sometimes did fare rather roughly, but what signifies that now? *My object was attained.*"

## CHAPTER III

### EFFICIENCY AND HONOURS

#### • 1775—1782

“Weak things grow strong by unity and love,  
By discord strong things weak and weaker prove.”  
*Inscription.*

IN June 1775 Captain Jervis was appointed to the *Kent*, but she was paid off in the following August, and on September 1st of the same year he hoisted his pendant in the *Foudroyant* (84)—a fine ship, which had been captured from the French in 1758—and continued to serve in her on the home station until she paid off in 1782.

After being nearly three years in commission, he found himself, in July 1778, under Admiral the Honourable A. Keppel.

The year 1778 was memorable as one in which the struggle of the American Colonies for independence entered upon its final phase, and also for the rupture of our relations with France and Spain.

On April 7th the Duke of Richmond moved an address to the King, supported by the whole of the Rockingham party, recommending

the recognition of the Independence of the American Colonies. It was in the course of this debate that there occurred that memorable scene when the great Lord Chatham came to the House from his retirement. Dressed in a rich suit of black velvet, with a full wig, and wrapped in flannel to the knees, supported on one side by his son, the younger Pitt, and on the other by his son-in-law, Lord Mahon, and resting on his crutches, he at first spoke with difficulty—but as he grew warm his voice rose, and was as harmonious as ever. “My Lords,” he said, “I rejoice that the grave has not closed on me, that I am still alive, to lift up my voice against the dismemberment of this most ancient and most noble monarchy.” This speech was his last, for, little more than a month later, he died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

On March 10th the French Ambassador left London, having notified the English Government that France had acknowledged the independence of the United States and had made a defensive treaty with them. England at once recalled her Ambassador, although the King of Spain attempted to mediate.

On June 12th, 1778, Admiral Keppel left Plymouth with twenty sail of the line and was joined later by two more. He was burdened with an immense responsibility, for war had not yet been proclaimed between France and England, and, as Commander-in-Chief of the



VICE-ADMIRAL THE HON. A. KEPPEL.

*From a print lent by Messrs. T. H. Parker, printsellers, 45, Whitcomb St., London.*



Channel Fleet, he had unlimited discretionary power of action given to him by a Government which would not have hesitated to disavow him if things had gone wrong. He fell in with some French cruisers which had evidently been sent to watch his movements. Keppel hoisted the signal for a general chase. The *Licorne*, being overtaken by the *Hector* (74), fired a broadside into her and then hauled down her flag. The *Belle Poule*, Captain La Clochetterie, was overhauled by the *Arethusa*, Captain Samuel Marshall, which summoned her to surrender. This she refused to do, and a smart action ensued. The rigging of the *Arethusa* was cut to pieces and the *Belle Poule* was so badly damaged in her hull, and had so many of her crew killed and wounded, that she only got away with difficulty, when more British ships came up and took the *Arethusa* in tow.

Two other French frigates were seized and detained. This action may be said to have opened the war. Keppel now discovered that there were thirty-two ships of the line, and some ten frigates, under Admiral the Comte d'Orvilliers, in the harbour of Brest. The British fleet numbered only twenty sail of the line and three frigates—to so low a state had the Admiralty under Lord Sandwich's Administration allowed our Navy to sink. Keppel sailed back to St. Helens to collect more ships. He declared that he never felt so deep a melan-

choly as when he found himself obliged to turn his back on France. A fortnight afterwards, on July 9th, he was at sea again with thirty ships of the line and six frigates. The van was commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland, Rear-Admiral Campbell was in charge of the centre, and Vice-Admiral Palliser brought up the rear, whilst Jervis, in the *Foudroyant* (84), was next astern of Keppel.

D'Orvilliers had had two sets of instructions given to him: one of these was to fight, and the other to avoid an action if possible.

On July 23rd the fleets sighted one another. The British fleet consisted, as I have said, of thirty ships and six frigates, while the French had thirty-two ships and fourteen frigates, the French vessels being larger than the British ships of the same class. Ushant bore W.N.W. eighty miles, and lay to leeward of the French, while the British fleet was between them and the land. D'Orvilliers had no intention of fighting except on his own terms. For four days thick, unsettled weather prevailed, and the opponents were hidden from one another. During this time two of the French ships, the *Burgoyne* (80) and the *Alexandre* (64), lost their fleet and returned to Brest. At 9 a.m. on July 27th the French were sighted eight miles to the S.W. They were on the port tack, heading W.N.W. with a steady breeze at S.W. The English

rear had fallen to leeward, and Keppel made repeated signals to them to chase to windward, so as the better to support the main body if it could get into action. D'Orvilliers, observing this movement, expected an attack on his rear. Accordingly he wore his fleet in succession, and, by so doing, retained his position to leeward. The wind then hauled to the southward, in favour of our fleet, so Keppel stood on and tacked in the wake of the French. Then the wind shifted again, and hauled back to the westward, so the French wore together to prevent Keppel from concentrating on their rear division. The two fleets then passed one another on opposite tacks, exchanging broadsides. The French gunners seem to have done more execution than ours did, their guns being manned by artillerymen who had had constant training in peace time. They hulled many of our ships at the water-line as they heeled over to leeward, and at the same time inflicted heavy damage aloft to the sails and rigging. As the two lines began to pass clear of one another D'Orvilliers ordered his van (commanded by the Duc de Chartres) to turn and engage Keppel's rear-division on the leeward side, intending to turn his rear and centre at the same time and thus place Sir Hugh Palliser between two fires. But he was not obeyed, and, finding that he could not carry out his plan, he ran down to leeward and formed his fleet on the starboard



tack, heading to the east, in the same direction as the British. Admiral Keppel then attempted the same manœuvre, but so many of his ships had been severely crippled, in hull and rigging, that the order could not be carried into effect. The van and centre, which had suffered less injury than the rear, were now nearer the French. By 4 p.m. the fleet having repaired damages, Keppel ordered his ships to re-form line and renew the battle. Harland responded with alacrity, but Palliser, in the *Formidable*, gave no indication of having seen the signal. After waiting for an hour, Keppel sent a frigate to him, with an order to bring his division into action without a moment's delay. No notice was taken of his urgent message, and Keppel then signalled to the captains to leave the *Formidable* and take up their posts in line. Unfortunately, darkness now came on. D'Orvilliers left two fast sail behind him, to show lights, in order to deceive the British and hide his retreat, and steered for Brest, where he arrived on July 29th. The next morning only three French ships could be seen from the deck of the flagship. Keppel therefore made up his mind to return to Plymouth, and dropped anchor there on July 31st.

The British had 133 men killed and 375 wounded, and the French 163 killed and 579 wounded. No ship was either taken or sunk. Nevertheless, out of this indecisive action arose a

most lamentable political quarrel. A malicious paragraph<sup>1</sup> in a news-sheet accused Sir Hugh Palliser of not obeying the signal of his Commander-in-Chief. Palliser requested Keppel to contradict this, but he declined to do so. The matter ended by Sir Hugh demanding a court-martial on his chief, and this the Admiralty imprudently granted. The dispute then degenerated into a party question. Public and naval opinion was in favour of Keppel; but Palliser also had his supporters. Captain Jervis greatly distinguished himself in the action, and was also an important witness at the court-martial.<sup>1</sup>

I give here one or two of the questions put to him and his answers thereto :

*Question* (put by Admiral Keppel).—Your station being nearest to me, during the pursuit of the enemy, and after the action—which gave you an opportunity of observing my conduct, and of seeing objects nearly in the same point of view as myself—I desire you will acquaint the Court of any instance, if you saw and know of any such, in which I negligently performed any part of my duty on the 27th and 28th July.

*Answer* (by Capt. Jervis).—With great respect to you, and great deference to the Court, I hope I shall be indulged by that question being put by the Court.

The question being put, he answered as follows :

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the whole of this sad affair see *George III and Charles Fox by Traveller*, pp. 155, etc.

A.—I feel myself bound by the oath I have taken to answer that question—I believe it to be consonant to the practice of sea courts-martial. I cannot boast a long acquaintance with Admiral Keppel. I never had the honour to serve under him before; but I am happy in this opportunity to declare to this Court, and to the whole world, that during the whole time the English fleet was in sight of the French fleet he displayed the greatest naval skill and ability, and the boldest enterprise, on the 27th July, which, with the promptitude and obedience of Admiral Sir Robert Harland, will be subjects of my admiration and of my imitation as long as I live.

Being desired to look at the log and inform the Court how the wind shifted, etc., he glanced at the log, observing he did not suppose much stress would be laid on a shift of wind while in action, and was making some other observations when the Court asked :

Q.—You speak here upon your oath, from your own knowledge ?

A.—Yes, I have nothing to do with the log-book. I speak not from that, or from any minutes; I govern myself by the effect of the wind upon the ship, and not the point itself. I cannot speak to any point, nor will I. I do not speak to the point of the wind or compass, at this distance of time. I do not refresh my memory by log-books, or any other minutes, for I have looked at none. I pay no regard whatever to it, though I would not have a log-book under me altered upon any consideration not speak to the point of the wind or compass.

upon earth.<sup>1</sup> Yet I do not pay much faith to a log-book<sup>2</sup>, taken at such a time, because, where officers are attentive to an enemy, and to the Commander-in-Chief, they do not put down very shift of wind, except accurate persons are appointed for that purpose alone.

Q.—Did you ever know or hear of a British fleet turning their sterns upon an enemy of equal or inferior force, that enemy standing towards them, immediately after having engaged them?

A.—I deny the fact, in all its extent and meaning.

On January 17th, 1781, popular feeling ran so strongly against Sir Hugh Palliser that he resigned his seat in the Commons, and all his public employments, to the amount of £4,000 a year, while Admiral Keppel received the thanks of both Houses for having “gloriously upheld the honour of the British flag.” So unfortunate is it when politics are allowed to interfere in the service of the State.

Captain Jervis’s letter to George Jackson (second Secretary of the Admiralty) is well worth quoting here, as the testimony of a singularly independent and clear-minded eye-witness.<sup>3</sup>

“MY DEAR JACKSON,

“I do not agree that we have been outwitted. The French, I am convinced, never would have fought us if they had not been surprised into it by a sudden shift of wind,

<sup>1</sup> N.B.—A reference to the fact that Captain Hood (afterwards Lord Bridport) had altered his log-book.

<sup>2</sup> *Remembered to you after I have been out-*

and when they formed their inimitable line, after our brush, it was merely to cover their intention of flight. Four of our ships having got themselves to leeward (so far as to be cut off by the enemy if Admiral Keppel had not judiciously bore down to them) and the shattered state of Sir Hugh's ship, which disabled him from taking his place in the line, rendered it impossible to renew the attack on the evening of the 27th. I have often told you that two fleets of equal force can never produce decisive events, unless *they are equally determined to fight it out*; or the Commander-in-Chief of one of them misconducts his line. I perceive it is the fashion of people to puff themselves, and no doubt you have seen, or will see, some of these accounts.

“For my part, I forbade the officers to write by the frigate, that carried the despatches. I did not write a syllable myself, except touching my health—nor shall I, but to state the intrepidity of the officers and people under my command (through the most infernal fire I ever saw, or heard) to Lord Sandwich, in which particular mention is made of young Wells. In justice to the *Foudroyant*, I must observe to you that, though she received the fire of seventeen sail and had the *Bretagne*, the *Ville de Paris* and a 74, upon her, at the same time, and appeared more disabled in her masts and rigging than any other ship, she was the first in the line of battle, and really and truly better fitted for business in essentials (because her people were cool) than when she began.

“N.B.—Keep this to yourself, unless you hear too much said in praise of others.

“Yours,

“J. J.”

In another letter to Jackson he says :

“ It certainly was intended by Admiral Keppel to renew the attack in the evening of the 27th, and he sent a message by a frigate to that effect : ‘ Tell the Vice of the Blue I only wait for his division to renew the attack.’ Neither the message, nor the signal, was obeyed in any degree. It was too late ; the *Formidable* did not (in view) bear down at all. I conclude she was so disabled—she *could not*. In that event ought not the flag to have been shifted ?

“ J. JERVIS.”

The chief parties to the War of 1778 were, on the one hand, Great Britain, on the other the House of Bourbon controlling the Kingdoms of France and Spain. The American Colonies, engaged in an unequal struggle with the mother-country, welcomed it as an event likely to tell in their favour. Happily, their lack of sea-power (with the exception of a few cruisers that preyed upon our commerce) prevented them from taking any active part in the quarrel. Nevertheless, the necessity for carrying on this distant land-warfare was at once a powerful diversion in favour of the allies and an exhausting drain upon the resources of Great Britain. Gibraltar was also a heavy weight upon the English, who were perpetually called upon to relieve it, whilst that gallant soldier, General Eliott, held doggedly to its defence. But, seeing that the French and Spaniards, who, when united, were much superior in force to the English, were

obliged, from time to time, to return to their respective headquarters at Brest and Cadiz, it is surprising that the English fleet did not remain outside Brest, ready to defeat either squadron separately before they could join forces. At this time our fleets were engaged at a great many points in various parts of the world. Sir Edward Hughes and Suffren, both brilliant commanders, were busily engaged in India, while Rodney and Hood were dealing with De Grasse in the West Indies, and a defeat of the allies at sea would have relieved the pressure at all these points, as well as in America.

The principal event in the year 1779 had been the commencement of hostilities between Prussia and Austria, which originated in the revival of some obsolete claim of Austria to the succession of the Bavarian Estates, now that the Guillelmine line was extinct by the death of the Elector Joseph Maximilian. Prussia resisted this pretension. After many marches and counter-marches, both combatants withdrew from the field without having sustained any material loss other than from sickness and desertion.

Captain Jervis was still serving in the *Foudroyant*; at first his ship bore Lord Shouldham's flag, but soon afterwards, in June 1779, he sailed in the fleet under Sir Charles Hardy, taking the place of second ship of the line, or immediately astern of his chief. The united *Armée de France* and *Armée Navale* consisted of sixty-

six ships of the line and fourteen frigates, had assembled off Corunna, intending to sweep the seas of all English ships, to obtain mastery of the Channel, and to attack the coasts of England and Ireland. Sir Charles Hardy, formerly Governor of Greenwich Hospital, an old but distinguished admiral, who had seen much service, was in command of thirty-five ships, which had been collected together from every available quarter. The enemy, having spent five days arranging a code of signals between the ships of the two nations, steered northward on July 30th and cruised off Brest for a time, discussing plans with the Ministry at Versailles. At length they entered the English Channel and made their appearance off Plymouth. Sir Charles Hardy had missed them, and they had not seen him. When, therefore, the red flag was hoisted on Maker Church, to show that an enemy was in sight, the whole town of Plymouth and the country round was in great alarm.

The town was full of French prisoners, who became dangerously excited when they heard the guns of an attacking fleet. The gunners of the forts were short of cartridges, their supply having been drawn upon for the ships, and only 4,000 men could be found to man the fortifications. Fortunately, the enemy lacked enterprise. Comte d'Orvilliers and Don Luis de Cordova paced the decks of their ships pon-



dering what action they should take, and ended by adopting the Spanish policy of "Mañana!" But wind and tide wait for no one; and, by delaying too long, they lost their opportunity. They might have attacked on Monday, but on Wednesday, August 18th, an easterly gale drove them out of the Channel, and so strong did it blow that they were carried 150 miles to the west of the Lizard. By the time the storm had expended its fury, the combined fleets found themselves close to the British admiral and his ships. Sir Charles Hardy decided, in view of the great numerical superiority of the enemy and the exposed state of the coasts of Britain, that his best policy would be to elude them and avoid an action, which, if he received much damage, would leave the coasts defenceless. Accordingly he picked up Jervis and his consorts and retreated to Spithead. His arrival there was hailed with almost as much joy as if he had gained a victory. The Admiralty, under Lord Howe, considered that, in the circumstances, he had done right to retreat, but Jervis was much distressed about it, for he wrote in a letter to his sister :

"I am in the most humbled state of mind I ever experienced from the retreat we have made, before the combined fleets, yesterday and this morning."

The fleet anchored at Spithead on September

3rd, and on the following day Lord Sandwich was despatched to Portsmouth by the King with peremptory injunctions to inform the admiral by word of mouth that "His Majesty expected that the enemy would not be permitted to leave the Channel without feeling the chastisement which so base a conduct deserved." Jervis was the foremost among those who were strongly in favour of forcing a battle. Great confidence was expressed by all in the splendid set of captains then in command of the British ships, most of them being men who had served under Saunders and Hawke. Meanwhile, Sir Charles Hardy had received considerable reinforcements ; but, by the time his fleet got to sea, the allies had dispersed. D'Orvilliers' squadron had been attacked by smallpox, some 500 or more of his men being incapacitated by this dreadful scourge, while large numbers had died in most of the French ships. The French commander had also discovered that the Spaniards were of little value, for he wrote :

"Our allies are brave and loyal, but what I see of their seamanship confirms me more than ever in the opinion that they have no claim to the title of good naval officers."

D'Orvilliers lost his son, a naval lieutenant, who died of putrid fever on board De Guichen's ship. This seems to have broken his heart, for he retired into obscurity, and from henceforth we

hear of him no more. Thus sickness and disease, once more, proved themselves more terrible in their results than any actual losses in battle.

During the years 1780–81 the *Foudroyant* was still in the Channel Fleet, under Admirals Geary and Derby, who during that time, save on one occasion, scarcely ever proceeded out of soundings.

The year 1781 was marked by great movements of the combined fleets of France and Spain, but none of these led to results of any consequence.

On June 23rd De Guichen sailed from Brest, with eighteen ships of the line, for Cadiz, and there joined thirty Spanish ships. This immense fleet sailed for the Mediterranean on July 22nd, landed 14,000 troops at Minorca, and then proceeding out of the Straits, again moved northward to threaten the Channel. Most of our attention was now centred in Gibraltar, which had had no supplies since its relief by Rodney during the previous year. A great fleet of twenty-eight ships of the line, under Admiral Derby, sailed from Portsmouth on March 13th, convoying 300 merchant-ships to the East and West Indies, and ninety-seven transports with troops for Gibraltar. They narrowly missed falling in with De Grasse, who came out from Brest with twenty-six sail on March 22nd. They passed Cadiz, where the Spaniards were at anchor, threw in supplies to Gibraltar on April 12th, and re-

turned to England in May. When the fleet before mentioned appeared in the Channel fifty strong Admiral Derby fell back upon Torbay. Owing partly to the differences of opinion which arose between its leaders, but mainly to the Spaniards' reluctance to attack, the combined Bourbon fleet retired. Gibraltar had been relieved, and England had not been attacked.

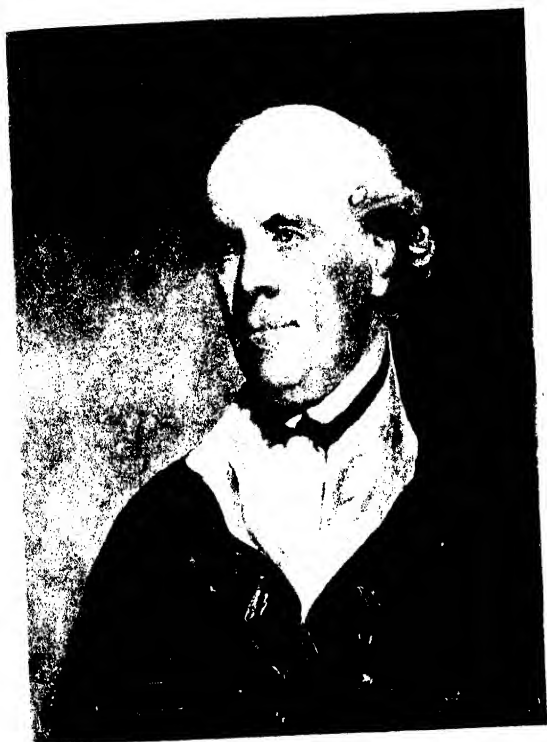
The year 1782 opened with the loss to the English of Port Mahon, which surrendered on February 5th, after a siege of six months.

On March 17th, 1782, Lord North informed the House that His Majesty had determined to make an entire change of administration. The Marquis of Rockingham was appointed First Lord of the Treasury, the Earl of Shelburne and Mr. Fox secretaries of State, and amongst other appointments Admiral Viscount Keppel took Lord Sandwich's place as First Lord of the Admiralty; while Colonel Barré, with whom Jervis had become friendly at Quebec, was appointed Treasurer of the Navy. During this year it was the intention of the Bourbon allies to collect a force of sixty sail of the line and sweep the coasts of Europe from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Baltic. It was expected that this force would be further increased by the Dutch ships—England having now deliberately forced Holland into a conflict in which she had little to gain and much to lose—but a squadron under Lord Howe drove these latter back into their ports.

As the Home Fleet was not yet quite prepared, Admiral Barrington sailed from Portsmouth on April 18th, with such vessels as were ready, consisting of twelve sail of the line. When he got a little to the south-west of Ushant, a signal was made by Captain Macbride, of the frigate *Artois*, that an enemy's fleet was in sight. The *Artois* was so far ahead that, although it was about noon, it was with the utmost difficulty that the admiral could discover (from the flag which she hoisted) of what nationality the hostile ships were. At this moment the *Foudroyant* was in her station (in the order of sailing) her captain having just returned from the flagship, where he had been conferring with the admiral. The signal having been made for a "general chase," the *Foudroyant*, owing to her superior sailing qualities, reached a long way ahead of the other ships of the fleet, and by evening she had made out the enemy to be six French ships of war and eighteen sail of convoy.

All the rest of the British fleet, being then a long way astern, soon after fell out of sight, and remained so during the next day.

At 10 p.m. the French ships of war separated, and Captain Jervis selected the largest of them for pursuit. Mr. Richard Bowen, one of his midshipmen, who was acting as his aide-de-camp, had the duty of keeping sight of the chase with his glass whilst the captain prepared his ship for battle : and, with all sail crowded on her, and



ADMIRAL BARRINGTON.



the wind increasing, this manœuvre required all his attention, good seaman though he was.

Jervis hailed Bowen and asked : " Do you see the enemy distinctly ? " On his replying in the affirmative, Jervis replied : " That's right, Bowen ; do you only keep sight of her, and, rely upon it, I will never lose sight of you." <sup>1</sup>

At midnight the *Foudroyant* was close up to the chase, which was now clearly distinguishable as a ship of the line.

The enemy was on the weather-bow of the *Foudroyant*, both ships going eleven knots, with the wind on the starboard quarter. When they were nearly within hail, the officer of the fore-castle cried out, " She has put her helm up to rake us, sir." At first Jervis was going to put his helm to starboard and give the enemy his starboard broadside, but his aide-de-camp (now by his side) could not help exclaiming, " If we put our helm to port we shall rake her, sir." " You are right, Bowen," said Jervis, and he put his helm to port, raking her with the port guns. This little incident, recorded by himself, shows how, all through his life, Jervis was ready

<sup>1</sup> A promise faithfully kept. At the close of the year, during the relief of Gibraltar, Bowen was, at Jervis's request, made acting-lieutenant of the *Foudroyant* and afterwards joined Sir John Jervis's flag in the *Prince*, being confirmed as lieutenant in 1790. In 1792 he was again with his patron in the West Indies, and the following year was made Commander. In 1794 he became post-captain of the *Terpsichore*, and, after frequently distinguishing himself in that ship, he gallantly fell at Teneriffe. Rapid promotion and a glorious career !



to listen to any man who seemed keen and intelligent, and, while reserving his own judgment if he took the advice offered him, never failed to give the credit where it was due.

As the French ship hauled up Captain Jervis clewed up his mainsail, took in studding-sails, and, passing close under her stern, continued to rake her. The carnage which ensued seems to have quite disconcerted the enemy, for she then ran before the wind, all her sails in confusion. This determined Jervis to board her, and he laid his ship on the enemy's port side, a little abaft the mainmast. Headed by young Bowen, the boarders soon had possession of her decks, and by 1 a.m. she struck her colours, the action having lasted three-quarters of an hour. The prize proved to be the *Pégase* (74), Captain the Chevalier de Cillart, who turned out to be an old acquaintance of Jervis. In the *Foudroyant* only Captain Jervis and five of his seamen were wounded, but on board the *Pégase* the number killed was great, and her masts and yards had received much damage. It blew so hard, and there was so much sea running, that the ships soon separated, and it was only with great difficulty, and after the loss of two boats, that a party of one officer and eighty men were conveyed to the prize and forty prisoners brought on board the *Foudroyant*. The instructions given by Jervis to the officer in command of the prize crew show his scrupulous

care for details and keen eye for discipline : he ordered that all the furniture, wearing apparel and everything else belonging to the captain and officers of the *Pégase* were to be taken care of, and that neither the French seamen nor the English were to be allowed to touch them, but that a sentry should be placed over them, and that nothing should be moved or brought out of the ship, even though it should be esteemed of no value, “for though I have the highest opinion of my officers, *we must not be even suspected of plunder.*”

How often, in modern times, would orders such as these have prevented the disgraceful looting that has been committed by both our own troops and those of foreign nations !

In the morning the weather moderated, and some other vessels of the squadron came up. The *Foudroyant* made signals for assistance, and the *Queen* sent an officer and a strong prize-crew into the *Pégase*. Captain Jervis deputed his nephew, Mr. Henry Rickets, to write to his parents the following letter :

“ I have the happiness to inform you we have taken a seventy-four-gun ship from the French, after fifty minutes’ action. We had not one man killed, only five wounded. My uncle has got a splinter, which has made both his eyes black. The ship’s name is *Pégase*, seven months old, and the captain an old acquaintance of my uncle. We have taken sixteen or seventeen transports out of

twenty. We engaged till one in the morning, and shall most likely be with you soon.

“Yours affectionately,  
“H. RICKETS.”

Admiral Barrington, in his report to the Admiralty, said :

“My pen is not equal to the praise due to the good conduct, bravery, and discipline of Captain Jervis, his officers and seamen, upon this occasion. Let his own modest narrative speak for itself.”

“‘FOUDROYANT,’  
“April 19th, 1782

“At sunset I was near enough to discover that the enemy consisted of three or four ships of war, two of them of the line, and seventeen or eighteen of convoy, and that the latter dispersed by signal. At half-past nine, I perceived the smallest of the ships of war speak with the headmost, and then bear away. At a quarter past ten the sternmost of the line-of-battle ships, perceiving we came up with her very fast, bore away also ; I pursued her, and at seventeen minutes past twelve brought her to close action, which continued three-quarters of an hour, when, having laid her on board, on the larboard quarter, the French ship of war, the *Pégase*, of 74 guns and 700 men, commanded by Chevalier de Cillart, surrendered. I am happy to inform you that only two or three of the people, with myself, are slightly wounded, but I learn from the Chevalier de Cillart that the *Pégase* suffered very materially in masts and yards, her fore and mizzen-topmasts having gone away soon after

In point of force the combatants were pretty evenly matched, for, though the *Foudroyant* was of somewhat larger tonnage and had three more guns on her broadside, still the French guns were of larger calibre, and the *Pégase* had a more numerous crew, besides soldiers in addition. The ship that was in the best order won ; Jervis had had his crew under his orders for six years, and his ship had been in action before, whilst the Frenchman was a newly commissioned ship. This told in those days, and will tell equally now and always. Admiral Barrington wrote to Mr. Rose :

“The *Pégase* is everything, and does the highest honour to Jervis. What a noble creature ! were we all like him, what might not be our expectations ! Is it not surprising that Jervis should take a ship of equal force without losing a man ? He, poor fellow, has got an honourable mark above his eye, which I conceive will be of no bad consequence, rather the reverse, for, as a man of middle age, it may make his fortune. The fair honour the brave.

“S. BARRINGTON.”

Jervis was complimented on all sides, not only by the King and his ministers, who rewarded him with the Red Ribbon and a baronetcy, but by all his brother officers as well—a kind of approval which he must have valued even more.

In September 1782 the *Foudroyant* was one of the fleet sent out under Lord Howe to relieve

Gibraltar. At this time, Sir George Rodney having been successful in the West Indies, and our troops having been withdrawn from America, all thoughts were with the brave defender of Gibraltar.

French and Spanish fleets, amounting to about fifty sail, had been collected to cover the attack on it that was now proceeding. No less than 1,200 pieces of heavy ordnance had been brought against the garrison. There were forty gunboats with heavy artillery, and as many bomb-vessels with 12-inch mortars, besides a large floating battery, etc. Nearly all the frigates and small armed vessels which Spain possessed were assembled, and 300 large boats were employed to keep the batteries constantly supplied with ammunition.

Such were the preparations by sea. Those by land were no less formidable. Twelve thousand French troops had joined the Spanish army, and the Duc de Brillon, having succeeded in reducing Port Mahon, was appointed to command the whole of the forces.

But no sooner were the batteries on the land side completed than General Elliott, by a judicious fire, destroyed them all. In no wise daunted by the enormous forces marshalled against him, he erected furnaces, and, discharging red-hot shot, contrived to set on fire the batteries and ships. About 4,000 in all of these red-hot missiles were fired during a

single day. The crews of many of the enemies' ships were in imminent danger of being burnt alive, but our gunboats, under Captain Curtis, very pluckily went to their assistance, rescuing numbers of them. Daylight broke on what must have been a most dreadful scene. Men could be seen struggling in the flames, and crying out for assistance, and the British were now as busily employed in saving the lives of the enemy as they had been in destroying them the day before. About the time of this attack Lord Howe sailed from the Channel with a fleet of thirty-four ships of the line, but, being delayed by contrary winds, it was not till October 11th that he entered the Straits.

Most of the transports missed Gibraltar, and were driven through the Straits. On their returning Lord Howe made a signal for Sir John Jervis, and directed him to receive on board the 25th Regiment, from the *Britannia*, to take under his orders the four line-of-battle ships and two frigates (which had also troops and ammunition on board) and to proceed forthwith to Gibraltar and land them there. He was, at the same time, to cover the *Buffalo* and her convoy, bound on the same errand. In three hours the whole were landed, together with 100 barrels of gunpowder, supplied to the garrison from the *Foudroyant*. Jervis then proceeded to fall into the line of Barrington's division, which bore the brunt of the martial action that followed.

between thirty-four British sail of the line and forty-four of the combined fleets of France and Spain. The whole of this service, and the rapid manner in which it was executed, seems to have impressed Lord Howe with a high opinion of Jervis's skill and energy.

Having thus relieved Gibraltar, Lord Howe re-entered the Straits, and then proceeded home. Campbell, in his *Lives of the Admirals*, wonders why the combined fleet allowed the relief to take place; but when one reads the account of the experiences of that fleet, as given by Admiral Tinling,<sup>1</sup> in the following letter to Sir W. Parker, and one considers the further damage which they had suffered during the bombardment, the marvel is, rather, that Lord Howe did not at once attack them after he had relieved the garrison.

*Letter from Rear-Admiral C. Tinling to Sir  
William Parker*

" SOUTHAMPTON,  
" March 16th, 1808.

" With respect to Gibraltar, I was a stripling at the time, and am at this day the only naval officer, I may say naval man, to remember the privation and hardships of that memorable siege. The Spanish and French fleet, of forty-six

<sup>1</sup> Charles Tinling entered the service as a midshipman in March 1780, and greatly distinguished himself while in command of a gunboat in the defence of Gibraltar in September 1782. He was a lieutenant of the *Orion* in Howe's action of June 1st and died at Southampton, November 27th, 1840, as Rear-Admiral.

sail of the line, were anchored from Algecirez to the Orange Grove. On the night of October 10th, 1782, there came on the most violent gale of wind I ever remember, the fleet firing guns of distress the whole of the night. At daylight on the morning of the 11th there were sixteen sail of the line drifted over to within two miles of the King's Bastion, the *S. Miguel* (72) on shore, and all the fleet with yards and topmasts down, and in the greatest confusion. As the weather became moderate about 6 a.m., the officers and seamen, with myself, left our tents and went off and took possession of the *S. Miguel*. The Spanish and French employed all that day in getting the sixteen sail back to their anchorage. At four p.m. the signal was made from the top of the Rock, 'The British fleet in sight!' One three-decker could not regain her anchorage, therefore made sail, weathered the Rock, and stood to the eastward.

"Lord Howe was an unfortunate commander, though a very brave one. Had the British fleet stood into the bay there would have been an end to the combined fleet; they could not have been saved.<sup>1</sup>

"At ten at night two sail of the line, with the

<sup>1</sup> In the *Life of Lord Barham*, he says:

"With Lord Sandwich's support, I determined on a measure which had never been attempted before, which was to bring every ship in ordinary into service of some kind or other; to listen to no excuses, but to patch them up so as to make them equal to temporary and home service, and by reducing their masts and number of guns, they served to the end of the war as part of the Western squadron and made part of the fleet under Lord Howe which relieved Gibraltar. To bear down all remonstrances, I visited all the yards myself. And amongst other ships laid up was the *Royal William*, built in Queen Anne's reign."

It is no wonder that Sir John Jervis chose the *Foudroyant* and the *Ville de Paris*, or that Nelson afterwards chose the *San Josef*



*Latona*, another frigate, and the *Panther*, which had charge of the transports, anchored in Rosia Bay. I believe it was Captains Phipps and Hervey (of the last I am not quite sure). They landed powder, stores, and provisions (which we stood much in need of) and two regiments. The only transport taken (at the back of the Rock) was the one with the women and baggage of the regiments. Our ships put to sea the next day, and Sir R. Curtis took a passage in one of them to join Lord Howe and return to England with the fleet. The combined fleet took five days to refit before it put to sea, and at the first change of wind the British fleet passed through the Straits, followed by the combined fleet in one extended line.

"Believe me,

"My dear Parker,

"Faithfully yours,

"C. TINLING."

On the return of the fleet to England the *Foudroyant* was paid off.

During the seven years he had been in command of her, Jervis made the *Foudroyant* a splendid school for young officers. She had come to be looked upon as the best and most efficient ship in the service, and her captain as the most skilful commander. The following letter from the Duke of Richmond shows the estimation in which Jervis was held and the eagerness of young recruits to be received on board his ship.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"As it is by no means a matter of indifference to me whether my nephew receives

the best education possible at sea or the common one—which is very bad—I must rejoice at his being with you, where he will be made both a seaman and a gentleman. Good sense in education is rarely met with, and unreasonable severity, or total neglect, are the extremities which are oftener fallen into than that just medium observed on board the *Foudroyant*; for even attention, without judgment, is of little avail. From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard, I am convinced that Lord Gerald is a very lucky young man, to have been received by you.

“I am, my dear sir,

“Ever your most obedient

“and faithful servant,

“RICHMOND, etc.”

Some idea of the even-handed discipline enforced by Jervis, without fear or favour, and tinged by no respect of persons, may be gathered from a letter he wrote to his sister when she proposed to enter her son—Jervis’s nephew—into the Navy :

“I forgot to answer the passage in your letter relative to Edward, which I now do briefly thus : His choice of our profession must be entirely his own, and he should be made to understand that I do not encourage it by any means. That he must lie in the berth with the other midshipmen, live as they do, and have no other distinction whatsoever. For the first year, he must rise at daybreak, and apply closely to his studies, and to his seamanship ; be very subordinate and respectful to all in authority over him, and never repine at the hardships and impositions he is bound to bear

in common with others. The life is a very rigorous one, and what few boys (educated as he has been) can bear.

"If he chooses to embark on these terms, I shall be ready to receive him ; but if he disgraces me, and his family afterwards, by turning his back, I shall bury in total oblivion his alliance of blood (which is no tie to me when unaccompanied by manly virtue) and have no other feeling about him than I should have for any other indifferent person entrusted to my care, who acted in such a manner as not to merit my esteem and regard. I forgot to mention that after the first year, in which I expect he will become master of the theory of Navigation, he must watch and do his duty with punctuality and alertness, and at least with as much precision as the best midshipman in the ship—for I shall always expect *more* from a very near relative than from those I receive on recommendation. I must beg you will never order him any clothes without my participation, for I shall make him wear his worst jacket through the winter ; he must not on any account be more expensive in dress or pocket-money than the others.

"Yours, etc.,

"J. JERVIS."

But although, before all things, a rigid disciplinarian who never spared himself or others, when necessity arose Jervis was essentially a kind-hearted and generous man, always on the look-out for opportunities of helping those who needed it.

In a letter to Jackson (Under-Secretary to the Admiralty) we have an instance of this

“ ‘FOUDROYANT,’  
“ August 9th, 1778.

“ MY DEAR JACKSON,

“ You must allow me to interest your humanity in favour of poor Spicer, who, overwhelmed with dropsy, asthma, and a large family, with nothing but his pay to support him under these afflictions, is appointed to the . . . under a mean man, and very likely to go to the East Indies. The letter he writes to the Board desiring to be excused from his appointment is dictated by me. Admiral Keppel has already offered to take Boger into the *Victory* if you promote, as you ought to do, out of her, and when that takes place I shall write for Spicer to be first lieutenant of the *Foudroyant* with intention to nurse him, and keep him clear of all expense.

“ J. JERVIS.”

The estimation in which a man is held by his friends and by those who have had opportunities of knowing and observing him closely generally furnishes a good idea to his character and disposition. The following letters serve to show the feeling which Jervis inspired in his friends and brother officers.

His old friend, Colonel Barré, writes to him after hearing of his wound in the action with the *Pégase* :

“ MY DEAR JERVIS,

“ I need not tell you how much I am alarmed at the different reports about you—for I declare solemnly that all the glory you can acquire will not compensate for the loss of you, if that should ever happen. This is not so manly

a sentiment as I ought to utter to you, but it comes from my heart.

"I rejoice most cordially at the honour you have gained, but I always expected as much. Let me hear from you when every doubt is removed. The danger you were said to be in shows the amazing number of friends you have.

"Ever most affectionately yours,  
"H. BARRÉ."

Admiral Keppel wrote April 26th, 1782 :

"I trust this letter, under cover, to your admiral in case you should have brought your ship to Spithead. I could not, in justice to my feelings of real friendship to you, refuse myself a day, in transmitting the sentiments of a grateful heart to your distinguished services and merit, and I rejoice to hear that the wound you have received is so likely to do well. My description to you of the general joy of the town will not require much pains to paint—that our first effort should be successful, and that my principal friend should appear so conspicuous an actor in the glory of it seems more than could have been expected in the ordinary course of things. I am,

"Your very sincere and humble servant,  
"A. KEPPEL."

## CHAPTER IV

### TROUBLOUS TIMES

1775-1790

“There is a necessity for laying a foundation for future success while the peace lasts, and which must supersede every other consideration.”—BARHAM.

It is not necessary to give here a detailed account of the political history of Great Britain or of her relations with foreign nations, but simply to furnish a rough outline of the events which influenced the country at this time, more especially with reference to naval occurrences. Without this, it seems to me, the narrative of St. Vincent's life would be somewhat bare and unintelligible, since the causes and nature of the difficulties he had to overcome would hardly be understood by any ordinary reader.

The chief features of the second portion of the reign of George III. were the war with the North American Colonies and the recognition of their independence ; the relaxation of the penal laws against Roman Catholics and the disgraceful riots which accompanied it ; the beginning of the movement, which still continues, in favour of obtaining for Ireland an equality of civil rights

and equal commercial advantages independently of England; the apprehension aroused by the growing influence of the Crown, and the desire for a more full and responsible representation of the people in Parliament which began to be keenly felt in consequence of the vast increase in public expenditure occasioned by the war. All these things led to frequent ministerial changes, beginning with the overthrow of Lord North's Administration in 1782 and followed in rapid succession by the Rockingham, Shelburne, and Coalition Ministries, till the reins of government were firmly grasped and retained by the hands of Pitt.

It may safely be affirmed that, when Parliament claimed the right to tax our American Colonies and render their resources auxiliary to our own, its action was supported and endorsed by the great majority of the English people. The unexpected resistance of the colonists having rendered the enforcement of this claim hopeless, the ground next taken up was in the maintenance of the legislative, apart from the fiscal supremacy of the British Parliament.

The Declaration of Independence, the disasters of the war, and the accession, first covertly, and then openly, of France, Spain and Holland, to the cause of the revolted provinces at length induced the Rockingham Whigs to acquiesce in the policy of withdrawing all pretensions to supremacy by the mother-country. This they

did from necessity, and not from choice. They were as much opposed to colonial independence as the Shelburne Whigs, who were ultimately compelled to conclude peace on this basis only; they resorted to it as an unavoidable expedient to extricate the country from a calamitous and exhausting war.

Lord North was severely criticised for his want of foresight in dealing with the provinces. At first he made no addition to the peace establishment in the belief that the force on foot would be amply sufficient to reduce the colonies to obedience. Disappointed by their formidable resistance, he increased his expenditure and his armaments, till they attained a scale of unprecedented magnitude; but his efforts were not ably seconded. The surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga in 1777 and of the Marquis Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781 were overwhelming disasters which do not seem to have been wholly due to the superior generalship of Gates and Washington. The naval administration of the country under Lord Sandwich was inefficient. Ships were sent out not properly equipped, the junior officers were jealous of one another and disobedient to their superiors. To such a degree had this refractoriness and insubordination—the results of bad discipline—extended in the fleets that the Admiralty were obliged to suppress those portions of the despatches of the commanders in which they



complained of the misconduct of their captains, evidently feeling, either from weakness or the pressure of the war, that they were not in a position to adopt decisive measures and bring the delinquents to justice.

A letter written by Sir George Rodney from Gibraltar on January 28th, 1780,<sup>1</sup> to Jackson at the Admiralty is an illustration of this :

“ I am sure no person whatever will receive the news of the happy success of the squadron with more pleasure than yourself, as I know no person upon earth for whom I have a more sincere regard. I could not delay writing to you a few lines to convince you of my sincerity in that respect. Providence has allowed me to be the happy instrument of restoring in some measure the honour of the British flag ; *to restore the old, good, necessary discipline to the British Navy will be of much more consequence.* 'Tis lost ! *it must, it shall be restored.* I avoid all complaints, many !—many ! I had the greatest reason to make, and if the fleet I am going to command should be as *negligent and disobedient* as part of that which sailed from England with me,—you will hear of dismissal upon dismissal ! I must, I will be obeyed. I will not tell you particulars now. Many brave, excellent, active, good officers !—others—negligent, slow, inactive, disobedient ! 'Tis high time they retire and leave the British ships to be commanded by none but those who are truly anxious to raise the honour of this country.

“ GEORGE RODNEY.”

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, Pt. III.

It was this lost discipline which, as we shall see, Sir John Jervis restored to the Navy, for he never missed an opportunity of bringing forward the best officers, or of stamping out disobedience.

England laboured under another disadvantage in this contest. All the spectators of the struggle between the mother-country and her colonies were on one side. The prayers and wishes of every European State were in favour of their emancipation. They encouraged and aided them in their resistance. They supplied them with warlike stores, clandestinely received their agents, assisted them with able and enterprising officers, opened their ports for the reception of their privateers, and, when these underhand practices became too notorious to be longer concealed, they threw off the mask and declared openly against us, leaving this country mangled, bleeding, and, as they thought, crippled for ever.

But events proved it to be only the syncope of a giant. The irrepressible energy of her internal industries, which, though it had not yet reached its full development, was now about to receive fresh impetus, soon set England on her feet again.

Externally, however, the powers of the country had never been more enfeebled, dispirited, and disjointed, than when the peace of 1783 was concluded by the Shelburne Ministry.

The country was impoverished; the state of our finances was deplorable. Our debt, funded and unfunded, had increased to upwards

of 250 millions, and the annual interest on it fell little short of nine and a half millions. But the most alarming<sup>1</sup> symptom was our naval inferiority. The confederated navies of the Bourbons greatly outnumbered that of England. Exclusive of the Dutch fleet of 25 sail of the line, the forces of France and Spain amounted to 140 sail of the line, whereas the whole force of Britain fit for service did not number 100, and of these many were undermanned and in a very bad state of repair. Many of our best troops had been captured at Saratoga and Yorktown, and Ireland was menaced with invasion. In short, the nation was well-nigh overpowered by enemies and difficulties, and peace on almost any terms seemed its only refuge.

The close of 1779 and the beginning of 1780 were thus a period of great national humiliation, disaster, and embarrassment. The combined fleets of France and Spain rode triumphantly in the Channel, threatening to make a hostile descent upon our coasts. Ireland was in a very perturbed state. Incendiary attempts, supposed to have been planned at the instigation of the enemy, were made to set fire to the royal dockyards and arsenals. Immense losses were sustained at sea by the capture of the outward-bound East and West India fleets. The French

<sup>1</sup> "In August, 1798, General Humbert (an old rabbit-skin merchant) landed in Ireland with a force of 800 French and defeated 6,000 English. The defeat was a complete rout."

had succeeded in sending a powerful armament to aid the revolted colonies, and a treaty of armed neutrality against the maritime claims of England was concluded between France, Spain, and Holland.

These losses and mortifications seemed to deprive the nation of all energy, and, though the reform of Parliament was urgently called for, it was not introduced till the session of 1782. To show how necessary it had become, it is stated that on March 7th, 1781, a loan of twelve millions was issued, and contracted for, on the most lavish terms, the scrip distributed among the supporters of the Minister (Lord North) being sold the next day in the money market at an advance of 10 to 11 per cent.

On January 20th, 1783, the preliminaries of peace were signed. It was about this time (1782-3) that Sir John Jervis paid off the *Foudroyant*. A listless and indolent life would have been ill-suited to a man who had hitherto spent his days in an uninterrupted series of active professional pursuits. He therefore obtained a seat in Parliament for Launceston. To parliamentary eloquence Sir John Jervis made no sort of pretence. Indeed, he had no very high opinion of its utility, never perceiving the finest oration to have any effect on the numbers of the division, to which alone he looked. He therefore did not aim at being a debater; yet, when he deemed it necessary to express his

opinion, his manner, from the first moment of his maiden speech, was natural, unembarrassed, and forcible. His thoughts were collected, and in the little he said his language exhibited a mind at once clear, accurate, manly, and energetic. He thus produced on those who heard him the impression he desired.

Long before he appeared in the House of Commons most of its leading members were well acquainted with his opinions. In his early days he had been intimate with Admiral Saunders, and with Wolfe, and later on with Admirals Barrington and Keppel and Sir Charles Grey. He was also well known to the Whig leaders, Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Shelburne, and Mr. Fox. Sir John Jervis thus became, and continued through life, the staunch supporter of the Whig party and of its principles, or perhaps he should be better described as a Whig Royalist, for although, in all constitutional questions, he strongly inclined towards the Liberal side, yet he was always a staunch supporter of the prerogatives of the Crown.

He spoke but seldom, on naval subjects only, and with great moderation. On a motion respecting certain abuses in withholding seamen's prize-money, he referred in scathing tones to the profuse expenditure lavished on the chapel of Greenwich Hospital, which he called "a preposterous jumble of art," and stigmatised as a disgrace to the country. He also pleaded the

cause of the wounded and superannuated seamen, and Mr. Secretary Dundas (Lord Melville) who had already done much for them, promised that the earliest and most particular attention should be given to the grievances of these men.

On another occasion he was brought to his feet when Captain Brodie was passed over in a flag promotion (apparently from want of interest), and made an eloquent speech in favour of his claim to recognition :

“ I likewise feel it my indispensable duty to do justice to that great man whose case is now under consideration, and to declare that a more gallant officer, a person of more zeal, of more true courage, or of more enthusiastic spirit of enterprise never was in His Majesty’s service.

“ Captain Brodie’s repeated applications to be employed in the war with Spain, when she joined France against us, was a sufficient answer to any argument which could be adduced from his having in his application for a pension declared himself at that time incapable of service.

“ His active spirit and his professional zeal had induced him to continue his command, immediately after the loss of his arm, and the consequence was that his wound grew worse from too much exertion in an unwholesome climate, and he was rendered for three or four years incapable of serving ; but when he was better he was desirous of returning to the exercise of his duties as an officer, and it would, perhaps, have been well for the service if the Board of Admiralty had accepted his offer.

“ At a time when party disputes divided the Navy, and ran so high as to greatly injure the

service, Captain Brodie not only kept his character free from that imputation, but his conduct stood forth conspicuous for its bravery and its merit.

“It fell to the share of a most distinguished officer sitting at a court-martial on an officer of eminence, to examine Captain Brodie, then commanding the *Stafford*, and to draw from him (though very reluctantly) an account of the proceedings of the day, on which the conduct of the officer upon trial had taken place, when, after hearing Captain Brodie out, the examining officer burst forth into an exclamation of applause, and declared that the oldest officers in the service might be glad to give up all the glory of their actions to have acted as Captain Brodie did on that day. Now on this fact alone [continued Sir John] I appeal to the generosity and to the justice of the House, and I ask you whether you can refuse to procure for a gallant officer that rank and those professional honours to which he is so justly entitled; for an officer worn down with age, and still smarting under the wounds received in the service of his country, who, unless justice be redressed, cannot lay his head in the grave in peace.”

The motion was resisted by the Government, and rejected, but Sir John Jervis's manly speech on behalf of his brother officer elicited much applause even from the unrelenting minister. The Whigs at this time were in opposition, and Sir John Jervis's name is to be found upon all their division lists in the struggle for liberty, while he was a regular attendant at all meetings in favour of religious toleration and parliamentary reform. Just before Sir John entered

Parliament he married Miss Martha Parker, daughter of Sir Thomas Parker, the Chief Baron of the Court of the Exchequer, to whom he had been devotedly attached for some years.

In 1786 he was placed on a commission appointed to examine and report upon a scheme for the fortification of Portsmouth and Plymouth. It seems to have been a well-concerted attempt at "jobbery and extravagance," but so completely did he unravel and expose its disadvantages that the scheme was forthwith rejected. In this affair he gave evidence of great capacity for business, and a keen and sagacious scent for anything that smacked of fraud or dishonesty.

It now seemed as if his business on shore was over, and the blue water was about to claim him again. In 1787 he was promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral at the age of fifty-two, and he commissioned the *Carnatic* (74); but it was only for a short time, for the dispute which arose between Prussia and Holland having been amicably settled, the *Carnatic* was soon paid off, and he was again on shore until 1790, when Spain brought about strained relations by manifestations at Nootka Sound, and showed her ambition to monopolise the sovereignty and trade of the New World, and her jealousy of any rivalry on the part of England. The Channel Fleet under Lord Howe was kept in readiness, and Jervis flew his flag as Rear-Admiral of the



Blue in the *Prince*; but when the dispute with Spain was settled without hostilities, the *Prince* was paid off and every flag-officer was allowed to promote one midshipman.

Sir John Jervis selected a well-conducted young officer who had no friends, but was the son of a lieutenant who had done good service, and, in answer to profuse thanks on his part, the admiral thus explained the reasons for his choice :

“ I named you for the lieutenant I was allowed to promote because you had merited the good opinion of your superiors, and that you were the son of an old officer and worthy man, in no great affluence.

“ A steady perseverance in that conduct, which has now caused you to be thus distinguished, is the most likely means to carry you forward in your profession ; for I trust that other officers of my rank will observe the maxim I do, to prefer the son of a *brother officer, when deserving*, before any other.

“ I have the honour to be, etc., etc.,

“ J. JERVIS.”

There can be no doubt whatever that in this Jervis was not only clear-headed and just, but wise and practical as well. There is much to be said in favour of the old custom of apprenticeship. The traditions of a father (to say nothing of the prior claims of one who has served the State) are most likely to be carried on by his son, and the habits and brains he has inherited will incline the son to follow readily in his father's footsteps.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NINE YEARS WAR

1792—1802

“Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel ; but, being in,  
Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.”

*Hamlet, Polonius to Laertes.*

THE period upon which we are now about to enter is one of the most interesting and important in history ; namely, the nine years of war which terminated in the Treaty of Amiens in 1802.

It demonstrated by the mass of extraordinary events crowded into its brief space, that, whatever may have been the influence of civilisation in diffusing luxury and enjoyment, it had had no tendency to lessen the activity, energy, and diversity of the human intellect, and human passions, when roused to action. The French Revolution brought forth giants—giants in speculations and practice, in political warfare, in morals, patriotism, and crime.

The first and most prominent event of this remarkable period was the commencement of the war of 1793 and the novel principles from which it originated. Unlike former wars, it

took its rise from the hitherto unimaginable ground of *opinion*—an opinion very general in England—of contingent danger, from the acts, chiefly internal, of a neighbouring State. Inflamed by the writings of Burke, and by accounts brought by the French immigrants who now inundated the country, people read with horror the details of the Parisian insurrections, of the insults offered to the French Royal Family, and of the trial and treatment of Louis XVI.

France was no longer the same nation after the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick and the successful resistance of 1792. The instinct of nationality had been evoked, foreigners had been everywhere driven from her frontiers. She was intoxicated by her triumphs, and by her sudden escape from the thrall of the coalition. Republicanism had become the faith—almost the fanatic faith—of the nation, and the zeal of the French in its propagation was hardly less than that shown in a former age by the followers of Mohammed. Equality was esteemed a universal right; and the newly accepted views in regard to the solidarity of the human race led men to believe that the whole family of man ought to share in its blessings. General Lafayette, after helping the Americans to establish their independence, purposed assisting the Irish Volunteers in achieving a similar boon. But Lafayette was only a lukewarm type of the zeal of many of the French republicans of 1792-3.

The Reign of Terror in France began about the middle of 1793 and continued through a great part of the following year, the leading actors in it being Robespierre, Danton, Marat, St. Just, and Couthon, most of whom were young lawyers, whose ages averaged about thirty years.

They governed by the guillotine, and on the principle adopted by the Dey of Algiers, who beheaded every one whom he disliked. "The glory of France," says Madame de Staël,<sup>1</sup> "was decimated by the deaths of Roland, Malesherbes, Bailly, Lavoisier, Vergniaud, Guadet, and Condorcet." Eighty victims a day were not unusually offered up to the Moloch of anarchy. The Revolution became blind, as well as mad, and on January 21st, 1793, Louis XVI. was beheaded.

On January 28th a royal message was delivered to the English Parliament, informing them that the King had determined to augment his forces for the purpose of supporting his allies and of opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France, at all times dangerous to the interests of Europe, but peculiarly so when connected with the propagation of principles subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.

The British Government began to display a vigorous energy. The vote of seamen, which in

<sup>1</sup> *Considérations sur la Révolution Française de Règne de la*

the preceding year had been cut down to 16,000, was now increased to 45,000, and several fleets of line-of-battle ships and frigates were ordered to be put into commission.

One of the first objects in view was the despatch of a sufficient naval and military force to the West Indies, not merely to safeguard our own islands, but, if practicable, to take possession of those of France, since it was believed that in that part of the world the Republican Government of France had been but coldly received.

In the month of November Sir John Jervis, now raised to the rank of Vice-Admiral, hoisted his flag in the *Boyne*, of 98 guns, and took under his command two 74-gun ships, two 64's, a dozen frigates, and six small craft. His friend, Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Grey, was appointed to command the land forces, consisting of 7,000 men.

When Jervis was selected to command the squadron he had been promised a considerably larger force than he eventually received. It is not known what the reason was for withholding the reinforcements which he had been led to expect.

Sir John Jervis afterwards himself made the following observations with regard to this episode:

“When the West Indies expedition came into discussion at the Admiralty in October 1798, Lord Chatham pledged himself to me that Rear-Admiral Gell, with one second-rate and two 74-gun ships, should join me at Barbadoes,

and that the *Leviathan* (after being new copper-sheathed) or some other 74 should follow.

“This assurance caused my taking a very strong part (with Sir Charles Grey) against the unanimous opinion of all the principal land officers, particularly Generals Prescott and Thomas Dundas, Adjutant-General Francis Dundas, and Quartermaster-General Symes, who mentioned that our force was inadequate to the reduction of Martinique, and that it was madness to attempt it. I never received a letter from Lord Chatham or the Secretary of the Admiralty to inform me that these ships were countermanded, nor was I ever acquainted that Rear-Admiral Murray with a squadron was ordered to America; although the protection of our settlements and trade on the Continent (of America) formed a part of my instructions, and I was kept in continual alarm for the safety of Nova Scotia and the island of Bermudas, pending the capture of the West India Islands; and was strongly prompted to send a squadron to intercept Admiral Venstible and the invaluable trade he had charge of, which I certainly should have done, had the engagement of the Admiralty respecting the four line-of-battle ships under Admiral Gell been fulfilled. The moment the West India Islands were reduced I sent the *Quebec* and *Alarm* to Bermudas, and afterwards the *Ceres* (in a deplorable state of sickness) with a supply of arms which Governor Hamilton demanded, as absolutely necessary for his preservation, menaced with an invasion from Virginia. The *Blanche* and *Zebra* were before detached to Halifax with His Royal Highness Prince Edward for the protection of that important post, and the *Beaulieu* followed, very sickly it is true, but the men likely to recover in a northern climate. The *Terpsichore*, wanting

an entire new set of masts and other repairs was also despatched—first to relieve Sir Charles Knowles in the *Dædalus*, who had been blocked up and grossly insulted by the enemy at Norfolk (in Virginia) for six months ; and, after performing this service, to proceed to Halifax for new masts and a refit.

“ These necessary detachments left me with few ships, and those so sickly—from the unexampled services their officers and crews had performed—that some of them could scarcely heave their anchors up, although I had repeatedly stated to the Board and to Lord Chatham the insufficiency of the force.”

Although this formal explanation was put on record by Sir John Jervis, who felt much aggrieved at not receiving his promised reinforcements, still he made the best of everything at the time, and carried out all his projects most admirably.

Among the officers who served under him in this expedition may be mentioned his flag-captain, George Grey (the son of his great friend the commander of the troops), Mr. Berry (afterwards the distinguished Sir Edward Berry), who had just returned from a long cruise in the West Indies, and, finding the *Boyne* about to sail, applied immediately to serve in her, Mr. Bowen, of the *Foudroyant* (who was one of the lieutenants), and Mr. Beynton (who afterwards distinguished himself at the battle of Trafalgar). The latter very nearly failed to get his appointment, for, owing to some mistake, it was reported to Jervis that he had just been married.

and in answer to his application he received the following reply :

“ SIR,

“ You having thought fit to take to yourself a wife, are to look for no further attentions from

“ Your humble servant,

“ J. JERVIS.”<sup>1</sup>

Beynton hastened to answer that “ he could not imagine who could have so traduced him, or who could have imagined him capable of the crime—for he disliked the idea of marriage as much as Sir John did—being only wedded to the service ”—and, having thus made his peace with his admiral, was appointed as a lieutenant of the *Boyne*.

In January 1794 the squadron arrived at Barbadoes, and, while preparations were being made for an attack on Martinique, proclamations were circulated through the islands, offering them liberal terms provided they were willing to surrender to the British forces. These overtures not being accepted, the expedition proceeded to attack. The plan arranged for the capture of Martinique was to attack in three separate places, so as to divide the enemy's forces. At Trinité General Dundas was assisted by Commodore Thompson. At Case Navire

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Jervis himself did not marry until he had seen much service, and he objected to his officers marrying early, holding that it tended to make them linger in port.



Colonel Sir Charles Gordon had with him Captain Rogers in the *Quebec*—and at Trois Rivières General Sir Charles Grey was supported by Sir John Jervis himself.

On February 5th the *Boyne* anchored in Marin Bay.

After a formal summons to surrender, which was refused, the boats dashed in to the shore. The French forts opened a heavy fire, which was at length silenced by the guns of the *Boyne* and *Veteran*, and the disembarkation was effected. The enemy hurriedly retired, leaving behind them a train to explode the magazine. Luckily this was discovered in time to prevent a disaster, and the British flag was hoisted on the forts in Marin Bay amid the cheers of the attacking force. Two days afterwards a second summons was sent, calling on General Rochambeau to surrender the island ; and, this also having been refused, Sir Charles Grey himself landed with 2,500 bayonets and General Rochambeau hastily retreated, destroying every house on his way, and threw himself, with all the forces he could collect, into Fort Bourbon.

Sir Charles Grey continued to advance, as he was to be joined at Fort Sallée by Sir John Jervis. There was in the bay an island called Pigeon Island, which, so long as it remained in the possession of the enemy, was a great obstacle to the ships entering the harbour. Brigadier-General Whyte was directed to take possession

of the heights of Maturin which commanded it, and, with the help of 200 seamen under Captains Grey and Nugent, this was speedily accomplished, the heights being stormed at the point of the bayonet.

On the same night that Fort Maturin was taken the army, with great toil, erected fresh batteries over the island, which were ready to open fire at daylight, and, the fleet having meanwhile taken up a position close to the forts, the attack commenced.

After a bombardment lasting two hours, the enemy surrendered unconditionally.

The whole bay being now open to the squadron, Sir Charles Grey moved his forces to Bruno, where he was joined by a division under Major-General Dundas, and a vigorous attack was made on the forts of Pierre, this being the last stage preliminary to the investment of Fort Bourbon. General Dundas had had hard work, and had met with opposition both on the beach and from the forts. Captain Faulknor, who was working with him, led his squadron into Gallion Bay, placing his sloop, to the admiration of every one, as close alongside the chief battery as the water would permit, and pouring in a fire from his guns at close quarters, whilst the troops charged with the bayonet. The French fought desperately, but were at length defeated.

Forts Louis and Bourbon were now the only obstacles, but fatigue was telling on our men.

who were not used to the tropical heat and rains. Indeed, it was only owing to the rapidity of the attack that they had been able to hold out, for longer operations on shore would probably have proved fatal to them.

The British divisions had now all arrived. The squadrons had rejoined the flag, and all was ready for the final attack.

Just at this moment His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent arrived from Canada and took command of the troops.

Whilst they were occupied in erecting forts and digging trenches, the ships had bombarded, and landed heavy artillery and stores for a siege. As soon as the ammunition was on shore a party of 300 seamen under Captain Grey, acting in conjunction with the Engineers, dragged four of the heavy guns to the top of Mont Sounier, a hill overlooking the forts, from which General Bellegarde's force in the valley could be commanded.

The dogged pertinacity of the seamen in dragging their guns a distance of five miles over rough ground, partly exposed to fire, was the admiration of the troops. They had to make their way for a mile through a thick wood, and across a swamp, and then up steep heights which even mules found difficult of ascent, then across a torrent-bed, the banks of which had to be levelled, impeded all the time by the rains and by a heavy fire from the forts. This